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Evaluation of the Millennium Development Goal on Universal Primary Education in Nigeria

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Evaluation of the Millennium Development Goal on Universal Primary Education in Nigeria

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This research addressed the question: What have been the constraints and supports to enable Nigeria to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 on universal primary education? This second of eight MDG goals is concerned with achieving universal primary education and ensuring that by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The MDG launched by the United Nations in 2000 was the largest global human development mobilization. The focus of this research was on primary schools in Nigeria in alignment with MDG 2. Primary education is an important component in the educational system of every nation as it is the institution upon which all other levels of education and educational achievements are built. Epistemologically, the research was guided by the interpretivist's worldview, and a case study methodology, with interviews and document analysis as methods. The participant sample comprised of 24 purposefully selected administrators of public primary schools to understand their views on the drivers and constraints associated with the implementation of the MDG 2. They were selected as leaders responsible for teacher supervision, facilitating teaching and learning, stakeholder management, and implementation of government programs. The study finds, and argues that the relationship between the drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education is complex. Four overarching findings emerged from the study. First, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 on universal primary education in Nigeria was influenced by a disconnect between policy and practice at different levels. Second, sociocultural factors also influenced the effectiveness of implementation. Third, there were several socioeconomic drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2. Finally, sociopolitical factors equally emerged among the findings from the data. Taken together, the nature of the findings suggests that the official policy of the MDG 2 is inextricably tied to the political, economic, and local lived experiences in both urban and rural Nigeria. While policy and programme initiatives established to facilitate the implementation of the MDG 2 are commendable, there appears to be a disconnect in practice. This is because some of the information gathered from research participants in relation to realities on ground do not reflect the content and spirit of the initiatives. That notwithstanding, the research found that the initiatives made certain positive contributions to the implementation of the MDG. The findings of this study could help to situate the condition of primary education in Nigeria within the global context, while informing policy on universal primary education.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by Rachael Ileh Edino. The work was approved by Ethics Certificate number REB17-2391, issued by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary for the project “Evaluation of the Millennium Development Goal on Universal Primary Education in Nigeria” on March 7, 2018.

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Eternal rock of ages, the great I am, the reliable God,
The mighty man of valor, the prince of peace and the Lord of lords,
take all the glory now and forever more. Amen.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my precious husband Dr. Marcus Ogwu Edino and our beloved children: Master Cosmas Enyo-ojo Scott Edino, Master Michael Ojochegbe Kentigern Edino, Miss Amelia Ojochide Frances Edino and Miss Edebo Mabel Clare Edino. You all stood by me throughout this doctoral journey and your unconditional love, prayers, patience, encouragement, questions, pleasant noise, moral and financial support made it possible. Our beloved children, please put your trust in God, work hard and you will excel. Do not put your trust in men but in God because men can fail you, but with God on your side, all things are possible. You shall do better than me!!!!

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List of Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BWPI	Brooks World Poverty Institute
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDG	International Development Goal
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPC	National Population Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter One: Introduction

This study investigated the supports and constraints that have shaped Nigeria's capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #2 on universal primary education. The eight MDGs marked a historic and effective method of global mobilisation to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide (United Nations, 2000a). The goals represented a decisive step taken in 2000 by 189 countries to free people from multiple deprivations over a fifteen-year period, i.e. 2000 – 2015 with widespread public concern regarding poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality, and environmental degradation. By packaging these priorities into an easily understandable set of eight goals, and by establishing measurable and time bound objectives, the MDGs helped to promote global awareness, political accountability, improved metrics, social feedback, and public pressures (Sachs, 2012). It was a global report card for the fight against poverty for the 15 years from 2000 to 2015 (Sachs, 2012).

The MDGs endorsed by the United Nations (2000a) were meant as an essential element to motivate increased development effort in and on behalf of poor countries. The focus of my research was on Goal #2 of the MDGs, which aimed "To achieve universal primary education and ensure that by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling" (United Nations, 2000a, p.5). My particular emphasis is on primary schools in Nigeria. As later explained in the methodology chapter, I interviewed school administrators (known as headmasters or headmistresses if male or female respectively), who are the administrative heads of public primary schools in Nigeria. While heads of k-12 institutions in Canada are called principals, the situation is different in Nigeria, where the term principal is reserved for heads of secondary schools (Grades 7-12), and headmaster or headmistress for primary schools (Grades 1-6). Although teachers have the largest impact on students' achievement, principals or school administrators are key actors in the school system. They play the important role of teacher supervision, and lead the implementation of relevant programs or initiatives with the overall aim of ensuring that excellent teaching occurs in their schools (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Donaldson, 2011; Hult, Lundstrom, & Edstrom, 2016; Madariaga, Nussbaum, & Burq, 2017; Meador, 2017).

Background to the study

Education is universally considered a fundamental human right and a barometer of socioeconomic development (Mizunoya & Zaw, 2017). Asodike and Ikpitibo (2012) declared that primary education is the foundation of formal education. They maintained that it is an important component in the level of educational system of every nation as it is the institution upon which all other levels of education and educational achievements are built. It prepares the mind and trains the child for higher and tougher

academic pursuits while providing young learners with the fundamentals of reading, writing, skill acquisition, information and attitudes necessary for proper adjustment into the society.

Despite the promise that education holds, the policy on primary education reform in Nigeria has been poorly implemented due in part to insufficient political will and poor management of scarce resources (Hardman, Abd-Kadir, & Smith, 2008). Hardman and his colleagues asserted that one of the main challenges facing Nigeria is therefore its primary education system.

The situation of primary education in Nigeria was captured in a UNICEF (2005) report, *Nigeria: The Children*, which revealed that children under 15 years of age accounted for 45% of Nigeria's population thereby putting a burden on education. It further indicated that 40% of Nigerian children aged 6-11 do not attend primary school. Despite the introduction, by different administrations in Nigeria of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in 1999, which was signed into law in 2004 to fight illiteracy, the number of schools, facilities and teachers available for basic education remains inadequate for the eligible number of children (Aluede, 2006). It is against this background that this research emerged to appraise Nigeria's performance with respect to universal primary education following the intervention of the MDG. This study is expected to make a significant contribution in this respect.

Research problem

Despite campaigns like the Universal Primary Education (1976), the MDG (2000), and the Universal Basic Education programmes in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004), Mann (2012) estimated that 3.7 million children are not enrolled in schools. Awofadeju (2012) asserted that Nigeria still has one of the highest levels of illiteracy in the world and is among the top five countries that will not achieve universal primary education even in 2020, which would be five years after the MDG target year and sixteen years after the Universal basic Education programme was signed into law.

Aid from the United Kingdom Department for International Development – DFID (one hundred and two million pounds, which is about one hundred and eighty two million Canadian dollars) to boost school enrolments in Nigeria (2005-2012), has not increased enrolments (Mann, 2012). With an estimated US\$158 million more to be spent by DFID by 2019, there are concerns on the value to be derived from such large investments in the face of apparent failure (Groves, 2012). Canada has also made important financial contributions to advancing work on the MDGs for education and gender equality. In this regard, the federal government doubled aid to Africa, reaching US\$1.5 billion in 2008-2009, as well as doubling its international assistance to US\$3.7 billion in 2010-2011 (Government of

Canada, 2014). Winthrop, Anderson, and Cruzalegui (2015) submitted that the slow progress in enrolment in primary schools despite the MDG commitment calls for concern.

To date, there has been no detailed systematic evaluation of the MDG 2 especially as it relates to universal primary education in Nigeria. This research intends to fill this gap. This proposed area is highly current and resonates closely with current policy concerns around education in developing countries highlighted in UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring report 2013* (UNESCO, 2013). With the official end of the MDGs in September 2015 and the simultaneous launch of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations, it is important to examine Nigeria's performance with respect to the MDG 2 on universal primary education, identify gaps and the constraints and supports that might have shaped it. The admittance by the United Nations (2015) that major gaps remain in reducing vulnerabilities for many developing countries after 15 years of the MDGs further re-affirms the relevance of my research.

Research Question

What have been the constraints and supports to enable Nigeria to meet the Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal primary education?

Aim and objectives of the research

The main aim of this research was to investigate the supports and constraints that have shaped Nigeria's capacity to meet the MDG 2 on universal primary education.

This was achieved through the following objectives:

1. To identify and appraise the drivers or constraints associated with the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal primary education in Nigeria.
2. To make policy recommendations that could help Nigeria to achieve/consolidate on the desired output of the MDG on universal primary education.

Significance of the study

My passion in education and human development is among the things that inspired me into this research. By evaluating Nigeria's performance in regards to the Millennium Development Goal #2 on universal primary education, my research is expected to highlight achievements and key strengths, identify gaps and weaknesses, and make recommendations. The research will also help to situate the condition of primary education in Nigeria within the global context. It is also my expectation that my research findings will inform policy on primary education in Nigeria, which could be beneficial to

children of primary school age who are not yet in school, and those enrolled who are not getting the appropriate benefits from the current education system. My research will contribute to addressing some of the challenges of leadership in Nigeria's primary education sector. A report of the findings and recommendations from this study will be provided to the Federal Ministry of Education and educational officials/administrators in Nigeria, Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goal Office, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development. This will help relevant stakeholders to reflect on the successes and failures of the MDG #2 in Nigeria and take appropriate steps.

Other dissemination of the findings of this research include publication in journals for wider knowledge dissemination within the academic community targeting Comparative and International Journals, Gender and Education, OECD reports, etc. The findings shall equally be disseminated through local seminars, conferences and community events. The findings of this research will be beneficial to parents who desire to have their children receive high quality primary education, and teachers who desire to see the creation of an environment and condition conducive for learning.

Case study - Nigeria

Nigeria is the case for this research. Nigeria is a country in West Africa and a former British colony with a population of about 214 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). The country consists of 36 states which are grouped into six geo-political zones (see Figure 1). There are a total of 774 local government areas in the 36 states. Resource allocation, administration and issues relating to governance are conducted along these zones since they are largely aligned towards sociocultural similarities (United Nations, 2008, p.7). The zones include, North-Central, North-East and North-West. These three are commonly referred to as 'the North' or 'Northern Nigeria.' The other three zones are South-East, South-South, and South-West. They are equally often regarded as 'the South' or 'Southern Nigeria' (NPC, 2006).

In terms of religion, Nigeria is equally split between Christians and Muslims with a very small minority practicing traditional religions. Christianity is the dominant religious practice in the south while Islam is predominantly practiced in the north. The country consists of over 373 ethnic groups with three of these classified as the largest and most influential. These 3 are: Hausa, Ibo (Igbo) and Yoruba (United Nations, 2008). The Hausa/Fulani, largely Muslims, dominate the North-East and North-West. The Southern Nigeria is much richer with an advantage in terms of better socioeconomic indicators than Northern Nigeria (Campbell, 2011). The south is home to extensive crude oil reserves located in the Niger Delta, as well as the city of Lagos, the commercial and media capital of the country renowned as one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. Northern Nigeria is also much poorer

than the rest of the country, with poor health and economic statistics (Campbell, 2011). Several factors are responsible for the decline of its economy prominent among which is deindustrialization and lack of investment in agriculture and infrastructure, and insurgency (since 2009). Compared with the south, its population are mostly uneducated, evident in hosting the highest number of out of school children in the country (UNICEF, 2013).

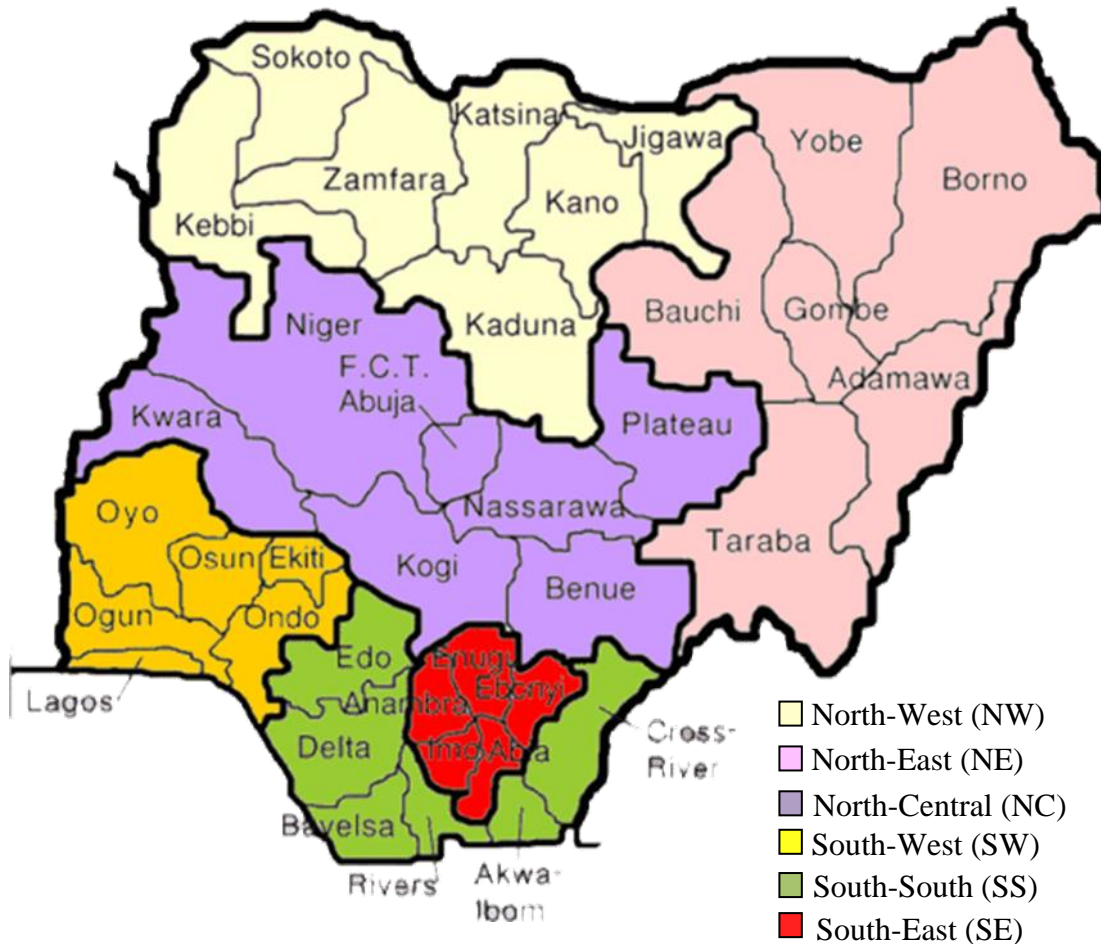


Figure 1 Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones

Source: National Population Commission (2006)

The North-Central has a mixture of minority ethnic groups and a balance in the Christian and Muslim population. Some Hausas are also found here (Ejiogu, 2012). The Ibo ethnic group (also known as Igbo) is the major ethnic group in the South-East. They had early contact with Christian missionaries, which gave them the opportunity of accessing western education (Ejiogu, 2012). The Yoruba ethnic group is found in the South-West. The zone equally had early contact with the missionaries as well as slave traders (since it was a major slave-exporting port) (Abiodun, 1997). Their influences brought western education to the zone. The South-South zone is made up of heterogeneous ethnic groups. The

zone, which is also referred to as the Niger Delta, is Nigeria's oil producing zone accounting for over 90% of the country's revenue.

Traditionally, Nigeria was ruled by traditional institutions headed by Emirs, chiefs, and council of elders who wielded enormous influence in their localities prior to colonization (Ibrahim, 2010). These traditional institutions are still in place as they play important role in promoting peace and preventing crisis in their localities. This is important as most crisis in Nigeria often begin from the localities within which the traditional rulers have solid base and significant control. Despite their importance, the Local Government Reforms of 1976 stripped these rulers of most their interventionist powers in leadership and governance, leaving them deficient since they are not empowered by the constitution, the main source of law of the country (Ibrahim, 2010). Although the lack of any constitutional power in their favor makes them to play only advisory roles at state and national levels, there is strong evidence to suggest that traditional rulers, though of varied culture and base, remain strikingly relevant in Nigeria.

Nigeria currently has a democratically elected government after about 30 years of military rule between 1979 and 1999 (Uzonwanne, 2011). The military era, especially in the mid-1990s, was characterized by human right violations resulting in sanctions from bodies such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Commonwealth of Nations. As a matter of fact, Nigeria's membership in the Commonwealth was suspended under military rule in the 1990s for human rights abuses. These sanctions included travel restrictions, suspension of international aid or development assistance, trade embargoes and others (US Institute for peace, 2016; Sklar, 2001). If the MDGs had emerged at the time, Nigeria would probably have missed out on the benefit that came with it, especially in the area of development. Sanctions were eventually lifted in 1999 when democracy was restored.

Structure of the Thesis

Having outlined the main research issues and context in chapter one, the second chapter is dedicated to a review of existing literature, highlighting the history and background leading up to the passage of the MDGs, an insight into the MDGs indicating when they were passed and their composition, and review of relevant literature on the MDGs. The chapter equally brought to light the structure and governance of the educational system in Nigeria including historical development of primary education in the country, as well as highpoints of what was achieved in relation to the MDG 2 from the perspective of the Nigerian government as contained in the MDG End-Point-Report. It concludes with an overview on the politics of MDG 2. Chapter three is concerned with the research methodology. It describes the nature and sources of data collected. It also highlights the method of data analysis and strategies employed to minimize bias and uphold the integrity of the research. The fourth

chapter presents the findings of the research. Quotes were presented to support participants' claims. The findings were discussed in chapter five along the lines of internal and external facilitators and constraints to the implementation of the MDG #2. Chapter six is the conclusion. The chapter highlights the summary of major findings and original contribution to knowledge. The chapter also presents recommendations, study limitations, and final reflection.

Chapter Two: Background and Literature Review

This chapter presents a history of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including background leading up to the passage of the goals; the eight MDGs, when they were passed and their composition; and a review of relevant literature about the MDGs. The chapter also presents the structure and governance of the education system in Nigeria with more emphasis on primary education and its historical development. It concludes with an insight into the MDGs in Nigeria, specifically highlighting what was achieved in relation to MDG 2 on universal primary education from the perspective of the federal government, as well as an overview on the politics of the MDG 2.

History of the MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a product that emerged from a wide range of global processes that includes international meetings (McArthur, 2014). What eventually became the MDGs drew on the outcomes of previous major international meetings. The first major meeting was the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 involving delegates from 155 countries as well as representatives from some 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The conference resolved to make primary education accessible to all children and reduce illiteracy on a large scale before the end of the decade (i.e. 2000) (United Nations, 1990). The delegates at this conference adopted a World Declaration on Education for All. This re-affirmed the notion that education is a fundamental human right and encouraged countries to intensify efforts to address the basic learning needs of all. The Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs defined targets and strategies to meet the basic learning needs for all by the year 2000. The goals that emerged from this summit include universal access to learning, a focus on equity, emphasis on learning outcomes, enhancing the environment for learning, and broadening the scope of basic education. Despite the promise it held initially, the Education For All targets agreed at the conference were not achieved by the 10-year mark set for it (i.e. 2000). It failed because of lack of commitment by governments of the world (UNESCO, 2000).

The follow-up to this conference was the World Education Forum in Dakar Senegal in 2000. Participants at the summit agreed on the Dakar Framework for Action, which was a re-affirmation of their commitment to achieving Education For All by the year 2015, and identified six key measurable goals aimed at addressing the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). Some of these goals were integrated into the MDGs.

The World Summit for Children (The Children's Summit) in New York in 1990 organized by Canada, Egypt, Mali, Pakistan, and Sweden, with the support of UNICEF and other UN agencies, highlights the interest in children matters in the 1990s. Attended by 159 representatives including 71

heads of state or government, the summit set a goal to promote children's health, education, and access to safe water and sanitation by the year 2000 (Shaw, 2007). A document emerged from this summit: World Declaration and Plan on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. Despite its good intention including the establishment of 27 goals, the summit failed to set out clear targets. The goals were divided into six categories: health (which had nine goals including eradication of polio and other diseases by 2000). There were three survival goals such as reduction by one third in infant mortality and under five mortality rate. Others include women's health with six goals such as access by all pregnant women to prenatal care. There were equally two nutrition related goals (reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition). Education had five goals including access by all couples to information and services to prevent pregnancies that are too early, too closely spaced, too late, or too numerous. A protection related goals were also established at the conference: improvement of children in extremely difficult circumstances.

Another summit of relevance to the MDG was the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), hosted by Cairo in 1994 (United Nations Population Fund, 1994). The conference produced the ICPD Programme of Action which outlined a plan for advancing human well-being which placed more emphasis on the human rights of individuals, rather than numerical population targets as the central piece of global development agenda. It is important to note that the ICPD principles and benchmarks informed the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health.

The World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 1995 resolved on the need to put people at the centre of development (United Nations, 1996). The summit identified poverty as a major problem. It also made ten commitments, and pledged to promote full employment and foster social integration objectives of development (United Nations, 1996). Despite reconvening in Geneva in June 2000, poverty remained a major problem.

In the face of declining aid budgets in the mid-1990s, members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) summarized the agreements at these international meetings into a set of international development goals (IDGs) with the hope that it would motivate donors (Manning, 2009). The IDGs provided an opportunity for the international community to agree on steps necessary to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development (OECD, 2000). The OECD (2000) in its *Development Co-operation* reported that each of the seven IDGs addressed an aspect of poverty and should therefore be viewed together since they are mutually reinforcing. For instance, higher school enrolments, especially for girls, helps to reduce poverty and mortality. Similarly, improved health care increases enrolment and helps in

poverty reduction. The poverty number of 360 million individuals in China in 1990 was reduced to 210 million in 1998. Thus, prior to the MDGs, development countries were measured through progress on these goals.

McArthur (2014) submitted that although the IDGs looked similar to Goals 1 – 7 of the MDGs, the IDGs were not supported by developing countries mainly because of the devastating impact of structural adjustment programs (SAP). International Monetary Fund (IMF) mandated policy reforms associated with SAP led to increased income inequality as well as adverse consequences on health system access and neonatal mortality in developing countries (Forster, Kentikelenis, Reinsberg, Stubbs, & King, 2019; Forster, Kentikelenis, Stubbs, & King, 2019). Thus, the focus shifted from the OECD to the United Nations where its then African-born Secretary General Kofi Annan endorsed a version of the IDGs in June 2000. This decision by Annan received severe criticisms and protests from global civil society thus prompting the UN leaders to retreat emerging with a strong belief that a more intensive approach to global partnership was urgently needed (Hulme, 2010).

The drawing up of the roadmap to translate the MDGs into action was an important part of its development process. Even though the IDGs, which were supported by the International Financial Institutions and the OECD countries did not receive unanimous endorsement by UN member states, it eventually became the model for the translation of the roadmap. The roadmap document thus bore all the hallmarks of the IDGs both in terms of the final goal and its result based management structure.

The process of translating the Declaration into Goals also saw the disappearance of the commitment to combatting violence against women equally on the grounds of measurement difficulties. The commitment to provide reproductive health services was also excluded because of the Bush administration and the Republican party in power in the US at the time in 2001 known for its alliance with the Vatican on such issues (Kabeer, 2015). The goals however contained maternal health separate from the goal on child mortality. Kabeer argued that even though Gender equality and women's empowerment were treated as MDG 3, and continued to be framed in terms of educational parity at all levels, the indicators to measure progress were extended beyond education to include women's share of parliamentary seats and of non-agricultural waged employment apparently on the assumption that women's education would have a positive impact on these outcomes. The rest of the goals were formulated in generic terms such as Goal 2: To Achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015.

The foregoing explains why civil society organizations were dismayed and perceived the MDGs process and content as a top-down and highly bureaucratic initiative (Kabeer, 2015). Kabeer noted that despite the organizations' participation in the conferences of the 1990s and their strong stake

in the frameworks and principles from which the MDGs emerged, their exclusion from the translation of the Declaration into the Road Map Document and subsequent 8 MDGs raises questions regarding the fairness of the process.

The various conferences preceding the emergence of the MDGs emphasized the promotion of human rights as a central principle behind the development priorities in question. Implicit in most of the conferences preceding the MDG was a conceptual approach to development rooted in the international human rights framework and the human development framework. Thus, the human development framework upon which the MDGs were built emphasized the well-being of the individual as the central objective of development; equality and non-discrimination in access to economic and social opportunities; meaningful participation of individual in decisions that affect their lives and well-being; and adherence to international human rights standards (Fukuda-Parr, Yamin, & Greenstein, 2014).

In the lead up to the September 2000 UN Millennium Summit, there were follow-up conversations with member states of the UN including the Group of 77 (G77) as well as incorporation of expert inputs from the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the OECD, World Bank, IMF, and later the World Health Organization (WHO). The result was the emergence of a September 2001 report of the Secretary General of the UN entitled Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Declaration (United Nations 2001). This was the first official document that presented the term Millennium Development Goals as a specific package of goals and targets.

The MDGs emerged from the Declaration (United Nations 2000a), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000. It was motivated by "shared values including freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility" (United Nations, 2000a, paragraph 1). Fukuda-Parr (2012) argued that it committed governments to a particular pattern of growth and development, which is equitable and supports human rights. The Declaration's goals, which were first introduced as the MDGs in 2001, emerged following a decade of efforts to redefine the development agenda throughout the 1990s.

The Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations Millennium Declaration was signed in September 2000 at a conference of world leaders in New York giving rise to the millennium development goals (MDGs) (United Nations 2000a). The declaration committed leaders from across the globe to tackle poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. Easterly (2009) argued that

a major centrepiece of foreign aid efforts in the new millennium was the idea of attaining eight millennium development goals (MDGs) for developing nations by the year 2015 on a number of social and economic indicators. The MDGs which had specific targets and indicators emerged as a response to many of the world's foremost challenges. They were formulated into 8 goals, 21 targets or sub-goals, and 60 indicators, all focused on time-bound policy outcomes (Hulme, 2009). The eight goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education: ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women (eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015);
4. Reduce child mortality rates;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. Develop a global partnership for development

These goals represent an unprecedented global consensus about measures to reduce poverty (Waage, Banerji, Campbell, and Unterhalter, 2010). Since emerging in 2000, they have dominated discussions across many nations and international development agencies.

Review of Literature about the MDGs

The MDGs were meant as an essential element to motivate increased development effort in and on behalf of poor countries (Sachs, 2012). Waage et al. (2010) identified four important positive contributions of the MDGs ranging from provision of a focus for advocacy, improvement of the monitoring of development projects, encouragement of global political consensus, and the improvement of the targeting and flow of aid. Given its endorsement by 189 countries, the MDGs represent an unprecedented consensus on international development. If viewed from this perspective, the MDGs can be said to have been more successful than some of the United Nations earlier initiatives such as the international development goals, World Declaration on Education for All, Dakar Framework for Action, International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action, and the World Declaration and Plan on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. A survey of 118 countries by the United Nations Development Group (2005) indicated that 86% acted in

response to the MDGs. The UNDP (2003) had reported two years earlier that the MDGs were the first global political endorsement with a clear focus on, and means to engage directly with the world's people. The MDGs also brought popular issues such as poverty reduction, infectious disease and often neglected issues such as child survival and gender to the limelight. For instance, although gender emerged from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 especially with the establishment of mechanisms and approaches to mainstreaming of gender issues within several ministries, their impact appeared insignificant. The emergence of the MDGs encouraged donors to include gender equity in aid packages (MacDonald, 2003; Schech & Mustafa, 2010; Skard, 2009).

The MDGs also played an important role by helping to improve the targeting and flow of aid and other investments supported by the way in which donors linked the MDGs to their strategies for aid provision (DFID, 2009), and an increment in resource mobilization (Bourguignon, Benassy-Quere, & Decon, 2009). The OECD, WHO, and the World Bank (2008) reported that between 2000 when the Millennium Declaration was adopted and 2006, total development assistance for health was doubled from US\$6.8 billion to US\$16.7 billion.

The MDGs made notable success in encouraging a global consensus, providing a focus for advocacy, improving the targeting and flow of aid and improving the monitoring of development projects (Waage et al., 2010). The MDGs have also significantly influenced national education and development policies in countries identified as developing (McCormick, 2014).

The MDGs did make some significant contributions to developing countries. For instance, Winthrop, Anderson, and Cruzalegui (2015) submitted that some countries made significant progress towards universal primary education since 2000. They maintained that the number of children not attending school was reduced by half between 1999 and 2011 as a result of huge improvements in South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan African countries. The driving force behind this progress was a global compact on learning, which was a mutual commitment between developing countries and aid donors (Brookings Institution, 2016).

The former United Nations Secretary General (Ban Ki-Moon) in the latter days of the MDGs submitted that the global mobilization behind the MDGs has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history including lifting more than one billion people out of poverty (United Nations, 2015). The MDGs equally generated new and innovative partnerships, galvanized public opinion and showed the immense value of setting ambitious goals. By putting people and their immediate needs at the forefront, the MDGs re-shaped decision-making in developed and developing countries (United Nations, 2015).

A common critique of the MDGs is that in specifying goals, targets and indicators, there is often a separation along the lines of education, health and poverty so that each is approached on its own with little thought to contributions from the others (Melamed & Sumner, 2011; Van Norren, 2012; Waage et al., 2010). Furthermore, Amin (2006) argued that the overall creation of the MDGs framework was driven by the United States of America (USA), Europe, and Japan and co-sponsored by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the OECD. This is problematic since the intended beneficiaries – developing countries do not appear to have played important role in its creation (Kabeer, 2005). While the UN admitted that progress has been made, there is still much to be done in order to meet all the goals (United Nations, 2015).

There are also criticisms relating to the stakeholder engagement in the development process of the MDGs. Richard, Hercot, Ouedraogo and Delvaux (2011) argued that only 22% of the world's national parliaments formally discussed the MDGs. An earlier study by Kabeer (2005) corroborated this in his submission that developing countries and civil society constituencies were minimally involved in the development process of the MDGs. He maintained that this was a deliberate act since the underlying political and conceptual agenda of the MDGs framework suits the interests of corporations and rich states.

While the MDGs are generally believed to be an outcome of various global summits, Pogge (2004) observed that for political reasons, some important goals were deliberately left out. This was corroborated by Robinson (2005) in his argument that with respect to the MDGs on education (MDGs 2 and 3), only two out of the three timed goals deliberated upon at the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 were included in the MDGs. (See later section on the Politics of the MDGs 2 on Education.) The target of equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults as well as the target of adult literacy, especially for women were omitted from the MDGs. This explains why Fukuda-Parr (2010) doubted the original intent of the eight goals. Only one of the seven major objectives of the Declaration (i.e. development and poverty eradication) became crucial to the MDGs framework while goals such as security, peace, disarmament, democracy and human right were omitted (Hill, Mansoor & Claudio, 2010; Waage et al., 2010). Langford (2010) also argued that the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women was confined to gender equality in education, and the target for affordable water was removed from the MDGs list to pave way for privatization in the sector.

A common, cross-sectional vision of development was not part of the formulation of the MDGs and has led to fragmentation, incoherence and gaps in the existing framework (Waage et al., 2010). For instance, having two separate goals for maternal and child health is an instance of such negligence. Similarly, the separate focus on malaria and HIV thereby missing the opportunity to explore a holistic

approach towards addressing these two deadly diseases is another manifestation of the disconnect (Brikci & Holder, 2011; Molyneux, 2008). The nature of the goals and the UN's claim of a reflection of diversity leaves certain gaps in coverage thereby failing to realize collaboration that could arise across their implementation. Waage et al. (2010) maintained that in some cases, targets present a measure of achievement that is too narrow, or might not identify a clear means of delivery.

The MDGs also has a weakness especially as it relates to the absence of clear ownership and leadership internationally and nationally, and a problem with equity in particular (Waage et al., 2010). Equity becomes an issue because many goals target attainment of a specific minimum standard such as income, education, or maternal or child survival. Raising people above this benchmark might mean a focus on those for whom least effort is required thereby neglecting groups that for geographical, ethnic, or other reasons, are more difficult to reach, thereby promoting inequity. To this end, Waage and his colleagues suggested that future goals needed to be built on shared vision of development, and not on the bundling together of a set of independent development targets. They equally conceptualized development as a dynamic process involving sustainable and equitable access to improved wellbeing, which is achieved by expansion of access to services that deliver the different elements of wellbeing.

Waage et al. (2010) maintained that a holistic approach was needed to avoid gaps in the development agenda in order to ensure synergy between its interlinked components, each of which should address elements of human, social, and environmental development. This aligns with earlier submissions by Easterly (2009) that the MDGs would have made greater difference if elements of wellbeing were delivered to ensure equity of opportunity and outcome, recognizing its complex and local nature, and addressing all communities while taking a pro-poor approach. Waage et al. (2010) argued that equity is a key feature of sustainability, as is a commitment to focusing productivity growth where it is needed. They maintained that a broad development agenda arising from this process should be agreed internationally, but developed locally, to ensure ownership of goals and their monitoring across society nationally, regionally, and globally.

Even the United Nations admitted that they were issues with the MDGs. At the expiration of its 15 years (in 2015), the UN declared that the world's poor remained overwhelmingly concentrated in some parts of the world (United Nations, 2015). Progress had appeared to bypass women and those who were lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability or ethnicity. Rural-urban disparities still remained visible (United Nations, 2015).

The MDGs were unambitious when measured through the lens of unmet basic human needs (Barnes & Brown, 2011). The authors reasoned that the inability to meet basic goals like eradication of hunger means that something was wrong. Langford (2010) observed that the goal for low and

middle-income countries fall short because they were too ambitious for some countries and not challenging enough for others.

Hayman (2007) argued that the limited list of the MDGs created an enabling environment for donors to justify policies exclusively focused on the MDGs targets. Saith (2006) earlier faulted the concentration of the MDGs framework largely on developing countries. He argued that this serves to localize the problem of development firmly to third world countries. By operating the goals and targets as country-specific goals, it gives a limited consideration to national baselines, contexts and implementation capacities (AbouZahr & Boerma, 2010).

The absence of accountability from every MDGs (except Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development) is another major weakness of the MDGs (Davids, 2011; Van-Ginneken, 2011). Haines and Cassels (2006) had argued that making the MDGs national priorities without initial participation and consultation of developing countries has led to a lack of national ownership for the goals.

Hulme (2007) posited that nowhere in the MDGs was there any mention of the Beijing Plan of Action, which argued for the elimination of gender discrimination in wages, property rights and access to education. As a goal in the MDGs, gender equality is incorporated into the educational target: "...that boys and girls will have equal access to all levels of education by 2015" (United Nations, 2000a, p. 5). Hulme (2007) argued that despite support from European states and the World Bank, a small but powerful set of interests opposed the gender equality goal. These include the Vatican and a handful of conservative Islamic states and anti-abortion Christian groups in North America who discouraged the United Nations from including gender equality or women empowerment as an explicit goal.

The use of national averages or aggregated information makes the MDGs miss the poorest of the poor (Brikci & Holder, 2011). A situation whereby issues of inclusive and equitable progress are ignored within the MDGs due to abstraction and over-generalization calls for concern (Vandemoortele, 2011). The MDG 3 for instance shows that a target of decreasing gender parities is not the same as ending gender inequality since focus is reduced to numerical imbalances, whereas substantive issues are not addressed (Kabeer, 2005). Mohindra and Nikiema (2010) commented on this by criticizing the lack of objectives for gender-based violence and economic discrimination.

The MDGs equally failed to include political and human rights. In his reflection on the MDGs, Ziai (2011) argued that the MDGs targets were presented as technical rather than political problems where solution appears as simply increasing financial resources. Despite representing important and

enduring global issues, civil, political and human rights were not highlighted enough in the MDGs (Fukuda-Parr, 2010).

The MDG 2 on universal primary education highlights another flaw. The limited and exclusive focus on primary education, while ignoring the importance of secondary and post-secondary education, has left researchers wondering about the real motives of the actors behind the MDGs (Mekonen, 2010; Tarabini, 2010). Lewin (2005) had earlier argued that pushing for primary education results in more graduates that do not often have the opportunity for further education in developing countries. Mekonen (2010) equally faulted the MDG for not targeting the overcrowded classroom characterized by pupil-teacher ratio of 43:1 in Sub-Saharan Africa, at a time when the global average was 25:1.

Education in Nigeria

Education is administered by the federal, state and local governments in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for overall strategic direction, policy formulation and ensuring quality control. It also has primary involvement with tertiary education and some federal government colleges (i.e high schools). School education is largely the responsibility of state (secondary) and local governments (elementary/primary). Nigeria's education system encompasses four different sectors: early childhood/pre-primary education (including the creche, the nursery and the kindergarten), basic education (nine years), post-basic/senior secondary education (three years), and tertiary education (four to six years, depending on the program of study) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Mbakpuo, 2017). Basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling consisting of six years of elementary and three years of junior secondary education. Post-basic education includes three years of senior secondary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Education in Nigeria also consist of the Almajiri system based on the teachings of the Holy Quran. Almajiri is a Hausa word, meaning itinerant, traveler or migrant (Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018). It refers to a person who travels from place to place in search of Islamic knowledge and wisdom through intensive learning and research under distinguished scholars, while engaging in community or humanitarian services (Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018). Almajiri is a system of Islamic education practiced in northern Nigeria for young boys between the ages of 4 and seventeen who leave their parents and are brought under the tutelage of some religious teachers (Agupusi, 2019; Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018).

There is also nomadic education for the nomads in Nigeria, consisting of nomadic pastoralists and migrant fishing communities (Umar & Tahir, 2000). With a literacy level of less than 2% and little or no access to educational programs, it was thought that there ought to be a special educational program to address their educational needs. Hence, a special government agency, named the National

Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), was established. The Commission was charged with the responsibility of making education accessible to the nomads and also integrating them into the mainstream of the nation's life (Umar & Tahir, 2000). Like the NCNE, the federal government also established the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult, and Non-formal Education to eradicate mass illiteracy in Nigeria. The commission was also required to provide functional literacy and continuing education to youths and adults who had no formal education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The Government equally created the Universal Basic Education Commission (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004) to coordinate the implementation of universal basic education towards enrolment of all children in primary school. These multiple agencies have overlapping roles in the implementation of the universal basic education (Bolaji, Gray, & Campbell-Evans, 2015).

At the tertiary level, the system consists of a university sector and a non-university sector. The latter is composed of polytechnics, monotronics, and colleges of education. The tertiary sector as a whole offers opportunities for undergraduate, graduate, and vocational and technical education.

Primary Education in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives

Primary education in Nigeria has passed through different stages over the years. Before colonization and the arrival of the early missionaries, traditional religion was widely practiced in many parts of Nigeria, especially the largely Christian southern part, while the Qur'anic (Islamic) education which promotes the doctrine of Islam was practiced in the Northern part (Imam, 2012). While the north had emirs (traditional rulers), the south was governed by elders in respective clans. Leadership of the clan was by lineage with the most senior from each clan often leading the community. Children learned values and respect from their parents and older members of the community.

The early Christian missionaries were the first to introduce western or formal education to Nigeria in 1842. However, following criticisms relating to improper coordination, the British government (which was the colonial administrator in Nigeria until 1960) intervened through the establishment of Education Ordinances and Codes. The improper coordination is concerned with the dual role some of the instructors played in the task of winning new converts to Christianity (evangelization) and equally running the schools. Even then, the British government lacked a clearly defined policy on education for its African colonies until 1925 when it became apparent that special attention be given to primary education, which was the most common form of education. When in 1946

the Arthur Richard's constitution¹ led to the division of Nigeria into Northern, Eastern and Western regions, Nigerians became involved in school administration while the colonial masters were still partly funding it. At the time, crude oil, which brought about Nigeria's economic prosperity was not yet discovered thereby making it impracticable for the country, which was largely dependent on non-mechanized agriculture to fully fund education. This underscores the importance the British colonial administration attached to education in a country whose population was largely illiterate then. The missionaries were also allowed to run their own schools, which saw to an improvement in terms of quality of education (Oyelere, 2010).

The British Indirect rule in Nigeria did not promote primary education in the Northern part of the country like the eastern and western regions. McIntyre (1982) argued that the British colonialists at the time reasoned that introducing primary education in the region could alter the stable political situation in the region which was crucial to the implementation of their Indirect Rule policy. Northern Nigeria at the time was governed by Emirs who had the respect of their people. Imam (2012) noted that there was general apathy towards western education by the people who mostly preferred to send their children to the Qur'anic school and viewed western education with suspicion. This problem was a fall out of the colonial governments policy restricting the activities of the missionaries in the area thereby, curtailing the spread of Christianity and western education in the predominately Muslim Northern protectorate (Fagbumi, 2005). The free enterprise which characterised missionary work in the Southern protectorate was not permitted in the North leading to a widened educational gap between the northern and the southern parts of Nigeria (Ogunsola, 1982). Also when grants in aid were given to missions and voluntary agencies' schools, the Qur'anic schools were excluded because of their peculiar curriculum (Imam, 2003). Although western education was not pushed into the region, a handful number of children mostly sons of slaves were allowed to receive western education at the approval of the emirs (McIntyre, 1982).

Falola and Heaton (2008) argued that as British forces brought Nigeria under colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they adapted local political institutions to meet the needs of the British themselves. As a background, the term "indirect rule," is the British system of governing through indigenous political institutions which allowed local chiefs and elites to maintain their local authority while submitting themselves to the authority of a central apparatus of British colonial administrators (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The colonial administration altered the political

¹ The constitution was named after Sir Arthur Richard because it was written during his tenure as the Governor General of Nigeria. The term is the equivalent of the modern day title of President or Prime Minister who at the time governs a British colony while reporting to the Queen in England.

landscape of the region in several important ways. For instance, it brought together what had previously been hundreds of autonomous, independent groups of people under the single administrative umbrella of an amalgamated Nigeria. The process of indirect rule led to changes in the powers of traditional political leaders. The British often misunderstood the traditional political institutions through which they governed, and often had challenges identifying the legitimate traditional authorities. Also, the British sometimes extended powers to local rulers that they had never previously held, and in all cases they took away the sovereignty that local rulers had enjoyed previously. If any of the rulers displeased the British, he would not be the local authority for long, regardless of the traditional basis of his authority (Falola & Heaton, 2008). McIntyre (1982) reasoned that any attempt at introducing western education in the northern region could alter this arrangement given that the region already had Quranic education based on the teachings of Islam.

Although the deliberate refusal of the British colonial administrators to promote western education in northern Nigeria cannot be ruled out as a factor for the educational backwardness of the region, Oni (2009) reasoned that leaders of the region at the time were not keen on universal primary education as they appeared more comfortable with the Islamic system of education which had been prevalent for centuries. Antoninis (2014) attributed the absence of western style universal basic education in northern Nigeria during the Indirect Rule to resistance on the part of some of the leaders of the region who associated such initiative with proselytization. It therefore follows that the challenge to universal primary education in Nigeria cannot be resolved through attribution of blames to either the Colonial administrators or anyone for that matter. A holistic approach that considers every other factor might be necessary towards finding a sustainable solution. A high level summary of the development of Western Education in Nigeria is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Development of western education in Nigeria

Year	Key Development
1842	Introduction of western education by early missionaries
1925	Special recognition given to primary education by the Colonial administration
1946	Involvement of Nigerians in school administration
1955	Introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Western region by the Regional Government
1957	Introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Eastern region by the Regional Government
1958	Introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Northern region by the Regional Government
1976	Introduction of Universal Primary Education (UBE) for the whole country by the Federal Government
1999	Launch of the Universal Primary Education for the whole country
2000	Launch of the Millennium Development Goals at the UN summit with MDG #2 mainly focusing on universal primary education for all by 2015
2004	The signing of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) into law
2005	Commencement of the implementation of MDG 2 in Nigeria
2015	The end of the MDG and Launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted by Nigeria and 192 other countries, with SDG 4 focusing on quality education

Nigeria and the MDGs

For Nigeria, the MDGs were seen as the most influential development goals, which could drive development in third world countries if words were matched by action (Adedeji & Ako, 2009). Despite the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the related eight time-bound MDGs, Nigeria began to find its rhythm in the implementation of the MDGs from 2005 (MDG Office, 2015). This is because the country successfully negotiated a debt relief from the Paris Club² in 2005

² The Paris Club is a group of officials from major creditor countries whose role is to find coordinated and sustainable solutions to the challenges in payment experienced by debtor countries. Paris Club creditors provide appropriate debt treatment for debtor countries as they undertake reforms to stabilize and restore their macroeconomic and financial situation. Its membership is drawn from countries such as Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

which enabled it to increase and target public investments in pro-poor interventions aimed at achieving the MDGs.

Nigeria's debt problem is because of loans it received from the governments of 15 Paris Club members in the 1980s. Nigeria's external debt in 1985 was USD19 billion. As at 2004, Nigeria's external debt had risen to USD36 billion (Rieffel, 2005). Following the debt relief in 2005, the Nigerian President established the Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the MDGs and the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs to guide the use of the Debt Relief Gains to address pro-poor programmes and projects (MDG Office, 2015).

Indicators were the standards by which progress of the various MDGs was measured. The MDG 2 which is the main thrust of this study for instance had three indicators, namely: net enrolment³ in primary schools, primary six completion rate, and literacy rate of 15-25 year olds. The net enrolment at the end of 2001 was 70%, from 60% in 1995 (see Table 2). The figure increased to 84% and remained at that level for two consecutive years in 2004 and 2005 which were the years the implementation of the universal basic education program began, and the Paris Club debt was written-off respectively. Net enrolment peaked at 88.8% in 2008, declining in 2011, 2012, and 2013 to 59%, 79%, and 54% respectively. The inability of Nigeria to meet the target of 100% at the end of the MDG in 2015 is not unconnected with the activities of Boko Haram insurgents that destroyed many schools and heightened the insecurity in the Northeast geopolitical zone, thereby contributing to the already high number of out of school children in the country (MDG Office, 2015). There is also concerns around data integrity as some states manipulated enrolment figures in their relationships with the Universal Basic Education Commission (MDG Office, 2015).

Table 2

Net enrolment in primary school (%) (1995-2015)

Indicator	1995	2001	2004	2005	2007	2008	2011	2012	2013	Target
Net enrolment in primary school (%)	60	70	84	84	80	88.8	59	79	54	100

Source: Federal Ministry of Education (2015)

³ The net enrolment ratio is the ratio of the number of children of official school age enrolled in primary school, to the total population of children of official school age.

The primary six completion rate indicator experience significant fluctuations over the years as shown in Table 3. For instance, the indicator increased from 73% in 1993 to 85% and 94% respectively in 2000 and 2003, before dropping to 89% in 2006 and 82% in 2013. The primary school completion rate is important towards attainment of the MDG 2 because it is a reflection of the ability of the education system to prevent high number of school drop-outs. Given the fluctuation, more effort is required to enable Nigeria achieve the completion rate target.

Table 3

Primary Six completion rate (%)

Indicator	1993	1995	2000	2003	2005	2006	2007	2011	2013	Target
Primary Six completion rate (%)	73	69	85	94	78	89	78	77	82	100

Source: Federal Ministry Education (2015)

The literacy rate indicator is the proportion of Nigeria’s 15-24 year olds that can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on everyday life, including basic arithmetic and other life skills (MDG Office, 2015). The literacy rate trended marginally upwards in most of the years from 64% in 2000 to 66.7% in 2014 (Table 4). The significant rate of 80% achieved in 2008 could not be sustained.

Table 4

Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds

Indicator	1990	1995	2000	2008	2010	2011	2014	Target
Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds (%)	-	-	64.1	80	-	65.6	66.7	100

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBI) (2015)

There were marked variations across states and between the north and the south. With respect to variations across geo-political zones, the North-east recorded the highest rate of illiteracy with the insurgency compounding the problem(MDG Office, 2015).

Overall, Nigeria recorded weak progress in the three indicators of MDG 2 (MDG Office, 2015), and therefore failed to meet the target for the goal.

Local Initiatives for Implementation of MDG 2

The Nigerian federal government established some policy and programme initiatives to drive the implementation of MDG 2 (see Table 5). This was borne out of the rising number of out of school children estimated at 10.5 million (UNICEF, 2018a).

The National Policy on Education provides overall strategic direction for realization of that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). As a background, the national goals include the building of a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. Although with overall focus on all levels of education in Nigeria, the policy identified primary education as the base upon which Nigeria's educational system is built, noting that it is the key to the success and failure of the system.

The Nigerian federal government established the Federal Teachers' Scheme in 2006 to address the shortage of qualified teachers in public primary and junior secondary schools (MDG Office, 2015). By supplying qualified teachers to schools in rural areas, the scheme contributed to improving the quality of education. The two-year internship program for unemployed qualified National Certificate in Education graduates prepare the interns for formal absorption into the teaching profession. Through an intergovernmental cooperation, the federal government provides monthly stipends to the graduates while the state governments supplement through provision of accommodation or payment of an incentive. Over 25,000 participants were absorbed into the teaching profession by twenty-seven states and Nigeria's Federal capital territory in 2010/2011. The intervention can be considered as an important success story in relation to the implementation of MDG 2 in Nigeria.

Table 5

Key Policies, Programmes and Projects aimed at Promoting Education

- National Policy on Education (2004, 2007 revised)
- The Federal Teachers' Scheme
- Universal Education Policy
- National Admission in Tertiary Institutions Policy
- National Framework for Girls and Women, Technology and Information Policy (2011)
- National Policy on Gender in Basic Education (2006)
- Early Childhood Education Policy
- The Almajiri Education Programme
- National Campaign on Access to Basic Education
- Girls' Education Programme (GEP)
- Nomadic Education Programme
- Management of the N1 billion Fund-in-Trust for the Revitalisation of Youth and Adult Literacy. (See Mid-Term Report of the Transformation Agenda, 2012 for details of these programmes and projects).

Source: Adapted from Nigeria's MDG End-Point report. MDG Office (2015)

The Nigerian federal government launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 (and signed it into law in 2004), replacing the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program of the 1970s by the UBE (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). Nigeria's re-launch of the UBE policy was in response to the recommendation of the World Conference on Education popularly called Education For All. The 2004 National Policy on Education in Nigeria defined basic education as a type of education comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Aluede (2006) argued that 'basic' means that on which anything rests or the foundation from which other parts gets support. It is the foundation of sustainable lifelong learning as it provides reading, writing, and numeracy skills including a combination of a variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy.

The goal of the UBE is to provide free, universal and compulsory education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years. As earlier mentioned, the Nigerian government established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) as an agency responsible for coordinating all aspects of the UBE implementation. Its vision is to be a world-class education intervention and regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

UBE policy is implemented through close collaborative partnerships between UBEC and

State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) and basic education stakeholders at all levels.

The UBEC contend that there has been some improvement in education since the launch of the UBE. For instance, the UBEC argued that it has made progress in the area of curriculum improvement, by setting up National Early Child Care minimum standards for Early Child Care Education Centres, as well as production and distribution of the nine-year Basic Education Curriculum materials to all Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria. However, there are concerns given that Nigeria ranked 103 out of 118 countries in 2015 in UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) development index, which measures universal primary education, adult literacy, quality of education, and gender parity (UNESCO, 2015). The UNESCO's review indicated that although Nigeria's enrolment in primary and junior secondary levels increased since 2000, transition and completion rates remained below 70% (UNESCO, 2015). The report showed that participation in primary education remains low in comparison with primary school age population, while the quality of teachers is generally low.

The National Admission in Tertiary Institution Policy (MDG Office, 2015) highlights strategic guidance on admissions into institutions of higher education and therefore not within the scope of this study.

The National Framework for Girls and Women, Technology and Information Policy highlights the plan of the government to promote the interest of girls and women in information technology. This is based on the premise that access to technology and information plays a central role in global power relations and, as such, can be regarded as a determining feature of gender relations and women's empowerment. Men and women who have limited access to modern technologies are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of their capacities to secure educational, economic and other related opportunities, both locally as well as internationally (Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, 2006).

The National Policy on Gender in Basic Education provided the enabling environment for parity in access to basic education, promote retention, completion and high performance for all pupils especially often girls and disadvantaged children at the basic education level (MDG Office, 2015).

The Early Childhood Education Policy provided the policy framework which institutionalized Early Childhood Care and Education. The policy required state governments to establish early childhood centres in all public primary schools in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; MDG Office, 2015).

The Almajiri Education Programme was designed to facilitate the integration of the Almajiri/Quranic system into basic education. Three models were identified namely: the

mainstreaming of traditional Tsangaya/Quranic schools into the formal education system at its original location, establishment of model boarding Almajiri schools to serve a group of Tsangaya/Quranic schools, and integration of basic education in established Islamiyyah and Ma'ahad schools. A total of 124 schools were constructed under these three models (MDG Office, 2015).

The National Campaign on Access to Basic Education was launched across the geo-political zones to address the challenge posed by the high number of out-of-school children. In the South-east zone for instance, the Back-to-School Programme was initiated to address the issue of low participation of boys in education (MDG Office, 2015). Under the Girls Education Programme/Initiative, junior girls' model schools were constructed on a large scale.

The Nigerian federal government through its Nomadic Education Programme established model nomadic education centres and rehabilitated nomadic schools (MDG Office, 2015). It also constructed motorised boreholes and provided infrastructural materials such as model collapsible structures including chairs and tables across Nigeria's six geo-political zones.

As part of its efforts at improving access to quality education, the federal government also earmarked the equivalent of approximately US\$2.6m Fund-in trust aimed at revitalising youth and adult literacy (MDG Office, 2015).

The foregoing suggests that although the verdict at the end of the MDGs target year indicated that Nigeria failed to meet the MDG 2, it is not necessarily all bad news. This is because if the interventions listed are implemented to the latter, universal primary education in the country could experience a remarkable transformation. It is difficult to draw conclusions based on the content of a government report i.e. the MDG End-point report. It is expected that an engagement with research participants at the point of implementation will speak more to this later in this thesis to inform an overall conclusion.

The Politics of the MDG 2 on Education

The MDGs did make some significant contributions to developing countries. For instance, Winthrop, Anderson, and Cruzalegui (2015) submitted that some countries made significant progress towards universal primary education since 2000. They maintained that the number of children not attending school was reduced by half between 1999 and 2011 as a result of huge improvements in South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan African countries. The driving force behind this progress was a global compact on learning, which was a mutual commitment between developing countries and aid donors (Brookings Institution, 2016).

UNESCO (2015) made an important observation in its Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015 titled: *Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges*. The report noted that donor agencies and NGOs as a result of their interest in MDG 2, devoted significant resources to the enrolment of children thereby neglecting other important aspects.

Globally, by 2015 there were still 58 million children out of school and around 100 million children who did not complete primary education (UNESCO, 2015). Inequality in education has increased, with the poorest and most disadvantaged shouldering the heaviest burden. The world's poorest children are four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest children, and five times more likely not to complete primary school. Conflict remains a steep barrier, with a high and growing proportion of out-of-school children living in conflict zones in some countries including the North-Eastern part of Nigeria where Boko Haram terrorists' activities led to school destruction and closures. Overall, the poor quality of learning at primary level still has millions of children leaving school without basic skills thereby posing a threat to human development (UNESCO, 2014).

Hobbes (2015) argued that while the MDGs remains undoubtedly the most popular development program of the United Nations, there are certain things about some of the goals that leaves one wondering as to how a body like the UN could ignore certain important priorities. He maintained that despite the importance of education, the framing of MDG 2, calls for serious thinking. The UN measures universal primary education through enrolment rates by calculating the number of children that attend primary schools daily. Countries of the world who made important progress on that goal consider it as an important achievement, including the UN. A fundamental issue of concern however is the absence of mechanisms to determine the quality of education provided (Unterhalter, 2014; Hobbes, 2015). Hobbes (2015) contended that the use of development aid to hurriedly expand schools in order to increase enrolment has in many cases negatively impacted learning quality due to teacher shortages or one teacher responsible for multi-grade classrooms or recruitment of unqualified teachers.

Hobbes (2015) was not alone in his critique of the framing of MDG 2. Unterhalter (2013) had earlier criticized the narrow framing of the goal. While commending the UN for giving a prominent position to education in the MDG framework through targets on schooling in two of the MDGs (2 and 3), she observed that there were fundamental omissions. She argued that from a human development perspective, the framing of the targets and indicators provide a partial view of education. The MDG targets and indicators, in practice, have weaknesses with regard to the education component of the MDG framework and the capacity of education to contribute to delivery on other MDGs. The approach to measurement associated with the education targets and indicators, she maintained was associated with the exclusion of salient aspects of quality, context and equity.

In alignment with MDG 2 as framed by the UN, many education departments came to focus on a very narrow concern with improving access to primary schooling (Unterhalter, 2013). Heynemann (2009) contended that this narrow framing was powerfully driven by the World Bank, which, in the 1990s concluded that the rate of return was significantly higher for basic education compared to other levels, and should thus be the major beneficiary of donor assistance. The consequence is that virtually no development assistance was directed to secondary or tertiary education for a decade, and there was much less investment in gathering data on education participation at these levels (Unterhalter, 2013). Unterhalter maintained that the decision to start paying some attention to secondary and tertiary institutions was influenced by the World Development Report (1998/1999) and Constructing Knowledge Societies (2002) which pointed out that social and economic progress is primarily achieved through the advancement and application of knowledge, and that tertiary education is critical for the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge and for building technical and professional capacity. Although the World Bank acknowledged the importance of higher education after 2003, and placed secondary and higher education at the heart of its anti-poverty activities, the impact was minimal. Even when the bank encouraged other donors to do the same, the zeal was not similar to the attention given to primary education (Unterhalter, 2013).

The largest component of development assistance has been to primary education, either for specific projects on teacher development, district planning, or direct to governments through budget support. This peaked in 2009/10 at US\$5,789 million, when it comprised 43% of the total aid to education (US\$13,468 million) (UNESCO, 2012, p. 147). This represented a 97% increase since 2002. By contrast, aid to secondary education grew from only US\$117 million in 2002 to US\$426 million in 2010, while aid to post-secondary education was even more limited, expanding from US\$161 to US\$389 million in 2010 (UNESCO, 2012, p. 396-7).

This review will not be complete without re-visiting the World Education Forum hosted by Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). While there were some similarities between the Dakar programme and the MDG education targets in some areas, in others they were not. The MDG framework, considerably narrowed the Dakar goals. Early childhood education, adult literacy, the quality of learning, forms of learning outcomes and life skills were important concerns at Dakar, but none of this was present in the MDG goals and targets, which changed free compulsory education of good quality for all children as expressed in the Dakar documents into 'universal primary education (United Nations, 2000a; UNESCO, 2000). The concern with regard to women's rights and gender implicit in provision for early childhood education, life skills, and adult literacy were also not incorporated either into targets for MDG 2 or MDG 3.

Education is often portrayed as one of the successes of the MDG approach, with the number of children out of primary school falling dramatically (Unterhalter, 2013). From 1999 to 2011 the number of children of the requisite age band out of primary school fell from 108 million to 61 million (UNESCO, 2012). This is a major achievement, but it should not all be only about school enrolment. Equity concerns needs to be addressed. There have been concerns about poor progression for children who are from the lowest socio-economic groups, the most subordinated ethnicities, generally living in rural areas or particular regions that have not benefitted from enhanced social development (Unterhalter, 2013).

There has been no study on the leadership role of primary school administrators (commonly called headmasters/headmistresses), as it relates to their understanding of the implementation of the MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education. This research will fill this important gap.

Chapter summary

This chapter began with the history and background leading up to the emergence of what is now known as the millennium development goals (MDGs), indicating that it was a product of many international conferences. It highlights the composition of the eight goals and a review of relevant literature on the MDGs. The review suggest that the MDGs despite representing an unprecedented global consensus to address social challenges mostly in developing countries, have some flaws. These weaknesses are associated with the development process, structural, and content issues. The review suggests that a number of things went wrong with the framing of the MDGs. This might be responsible for the inability of some countries to meet the goals. All the same, the MDGs did made some positive impacts that could be improved upon by its successor – the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The former United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon (January 2007 – December 2016) in the latter years of the MDGs noted that the MDGs helped to lift more than 1 billion people out of extreme poverty, addressed hunger, enabled more girls to attend school than ever before, and promoted the protection of our planet. At the end of 2015 (the target year of the MDGs) he admitted that there were still inequality and that progress had been uneven, maintaining that the world needs to work together to collectively tackle root causes and do more to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). The chapter equally highlighted the structure and governance of the educational system in Nigeria including historical development of primary education in the country from the colonial era to present. It argues that since both the British Indirect Rule system and the leaders of northern Nigeria played various roles resulting in the delay in bringing western education to the region, apportioning balmes will do more harm. It advocated a holistic approach towards finding a sustainable solution to address the educational backwardness of

the north. The chapter also presented an overview of interventions and achievements in relation to the MDG 2 from the perspective of the Nigerian government as contained in the MDG End-Point-Report. It concludes with an overview of the MDGs in Nigeria specifically noting the indicators of MDG 2 and the level of progress and the politics of MDG 2. Overall, the MDGs can be said to have resulted in mixed blessings. This review provides a base that would help in later stages of this research especially in the conduct of fieldwork involving primary school administrators commonly called headmasters/headmistresses. While any effort at educating children is commendable, that there are still about 10.5 million out of school children, suggest that there continue to be systemic challenges and barriers to ensure that all children receive universal primary education. The next chapter is dedicated to the research methodology.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter is concerned with the methodological issues that guided my research. Educational studies usually investigate different phenomena using various methods, strategies, and analyses. The variety of methodological applications could highlight the nature of the research, the researcher's position, ethical considerations, as well as the underlying paradigm of the research. The expectation is that the research methodology outlines the different elements to enable researchers attain specific answers to their research questions. This is the focus of this chapter.

I divided this chapter into several sections. First, the chapter aims to discuss selection of research paradigm, and rationale for the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm. Beginning with the research paradigm is crucial because it defines the researcher's role, plans, decisions, applications as well as research findings.

Epistemologically, the viewpoint of the interpretivists is that our knowledge of reality is a social construction by human actors (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The interpretivist research paradigm is characterized by a need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seeks an explanation within the frame of reference of the participant rather than the objective observer of the action (Ponelis, 2015). Second, case study is discussed including associated critique and a justification for employing it. Therefore, in this research, I drew on interpretivist ontology and epistemology, and case study methodology.

The third section in this chapter discussed the research design and overall data collection. Various methods such as interviews generally, semi-structured interviews, piloting of interviews, and document analysis were presented including an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, and possible strategies aimed at minimizing the impact of any drawbacks on the research. Since there are six geo-political zones in Nigeria, I conducted 24 interviews in total i.e. four interviews per zone. The fourth section highlights the techniques adopted in order to analyze the raw data and present the findings. Other components of this chapter that were addressed include ethical considerations, which highlighted my awareness of relevant ethical and moral principles that were considered, as well as a reflection on my role in the research as well as strategies that minimized bias. The chapter concludes with a highlight of limitations of the study.

Research paradigm

An understanding of research paradigm is an important aspect of academic research for several reasons. For instance, Creswell (2014) argued that it is essential for researchers to consider the assumptions of the philosophical worldview that would guide their study, as well as the research design

associated with the worldview and the specific methods that most effectively translate the research approach into practice. Flowers (2009) earlier contended that such consideration would ensure that approaches relevant to the nature and aims of a particular inquiry are adopted, and researchers' biases understood, exposed, and minimized. James and Vinnicombe (2002) equally cautioned that since researchers have inherent preferences that have the tendency to shape their research design, there is a need for an alignment with a paradigm in order to be guided by the choices available in such paradigm. I therefore aligned my research with the interpretivist worldview, which is explained in the next section.

The choice of interpretivist paradigm for this research. Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran (2001) asserted that the main task of inquiry relates to an understanding of the potential ambiguity and uncertainty of social meaning. Research along the interpretivist epistemological perspective as shown in Table 6 deals with phenomena that are emergent and subject to social interpretation (Guo & Sheffield, 2006). Flowers (2009) argued that the interpretivist paradigm holds that individuals and groups make sense of situations based on their individual experience, memories and expectations in the social world. Meaning therefore, is constructed through experience, resulting in many different interpretations.

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) argued that since all knowledge is relative to the knower, interpretivists are interested in working with others while drawing meaning to create realities in order to understand their point of view and to interpret these experiences in the context of the researcher's academic experience. Since the overall focus of the researcher is to understand the meanings and interpretations of social actors and to understand their world from their point of view, it is highly contextual and therefore not necessarily generalizable (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). An understanding of how people feel or think in addition to their mode of communication (verbally or non-verbally) are essential (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). Flowers (2009) however cautioned that the close nature of the researcher and the researched in this paradigm implies that steps must be taken to avoid bias. Cognizant of this fact, I have highlighted my role in this research and how I addressed bias later in this chapter.

Table 6

Description of interpretive research paradigm

Research Paradigm	Interpretive
Assumptions	Inter-subjective world which science can represent with concepts and indicators; social construction of reality
Aim	To uncover socially constructed meaning of reality as understood by an individual or group
Stance of researcher	Becomes fully involved with stakeholders and subject matter to achieve a full understanding of the stakeholders' world
Values	Values included and made explicit
Types of reasoning	Inductive
Research plan	Flexible, and follows the information provided by the research stakeholders
Typical research methods and types(s) of analysis	Ethnography; participant observation; interviews; focus groups; conversational analysis, case studies
Goodness or quality criteria	Trustworthiness and authenticity; fit with social norms; interpersonal consensus validated by rightness of advocacy (speech acts) and actions.

Source: Guo & Sheffield (2006)

Case study

Case study as an overarching methodological approach does have clear distinctions among researchers. Yin (2003) defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 20). Stake (2000) defined case study as the study of the “particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p.19). Simons (2009) focused on the purpose of research. She maintained that case study is an “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real-life context” (p.21). An important thing to note in these definitions especially by Simons, Stake, and Yin is their emphasis on case study as a process. This could be seen from their use of the terms: inquiry, study, and exploration.

An earlier definition of case study by Merriam (1998) had a qualitative alignment. She defined case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon, or social unit. She maintained that case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources. Particularistic implies that a case study focuses on a particular situation, event, program, individual, institution or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent. This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems (Merriam, 1988). Merriam further explained that descriptive case study implies that the end product of a case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study. “Thick description” is a term from anthropology and means the complete literal description of the incident or entity being investigated (Merriam, 1988, p.29). Heuristic case study means that it illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1988). Previously unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge from case studies leading to a rethink of the phenomenon being studied. The major influence in my research is Merriam’s approach to case study, and I therefore aligned my work with hers.

From an epistemological perspective, Merriam argued for the alignment of qualitative case study towards constructivism because the main philosophical assumption underlying all types of qualitative research is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. She maintained that the primary interest of qualitative researchers is to understand the meaning or knowledge constructed by people. This aligns with my research, as it aims to understand from the perspective of primary school administrators the influences of local policy initiatives on Nigeria’s capacity to meet the MDG #2 on universal primary education. Merriam’s work as it aligns with mine is further highlighted as follows:

The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own. (Merriam, 1998, p. 22).

I drew on this suggestion by Merriam (1998) to interpret the views of school administrators (i.e. headmasters and headmistresses) as it relates to the drivers or constraints associated with the implementation of the MDG 2. This, as Merriam (2009) later pointed out, is important because case study enables researchers to study real life examples in the words of the participants

Case study approach differs from other types of research because it studies units in their entirety and sometimes employs several methods in order to minimize errors and distortion (Sarantakos, 1998). By studying single units, case study facilitates an in-depth exploration of phenomena through which rich data is collected. Sarantakos (1998) maintained that case studies are a valid form of inquiry especially when dealing with prescriptive, evaluative and causal studies, and most importantly when the research context is too complex to be effectively addressed through survey studies or empirical strategies. He further argued that case study is often the preferred option when the research focus is in the structure, process and outcomes of a single unit.

A case study methodology, which focussed on public primary schools' headmasters and headmistresses, was adopted for this research whose aim was to understand how local policy initiatives facilitated or constrained Nigeria's capacity to meet the MDG 2 on universal primary education. This is because case study enables researchers to thoroughly investigate complexities of knowledge and information exchange between practitioners and develop an understanding based on contextual realities (Merriam, 2009). The literature review highlighted the inability of Nigeria like many other countries to meet the MDG on education. The former UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, equally remarked at the end of the MDG period (i.e. 2015) that while progress was made in some areas, overall, the goals were not met (United Nations, 2015).

Critique of case study. Despite the importance of case study in its diverse forms, it is not without criticisms. For instance, the status of case study as a legitimate method in research is often challenged by the view that findings from a case study are not readily generalizable (Tsang, 2014; Steinmetz, 2004; Merriam, 1998). Flyvbjerg (2006) challenged this stance in his argument that these particular criticisms were a demonstration of misguided and over simplified assumptions about case study and its value as a context-dependent investigation of practice. Stake (2000) earlier supported case study research in his submission that it is the purpose and meaning from a case study that shapes its contribution and value. He maintained that for the purposes of developing understanding and

extending experiences of what is already known, the disadvantages disappear. In his opposition to those who criticize case study as a weak research methodology, Thomas (2011) problematized the role that generalizability plays in social science research. He maintained that generalization in case study is not only unattainable but detracts attention from the purpose, value and insight to the local, particular and practical that is a strength of case study. Although critics of the lack of generalizability of case study methodology often point to the inability to inductively build theory through case study as evidence of methodological weakness, Stark and Torrance (2005) argue that it is this very emphasis on the particular, on examples and experiences, that enable understanding of accounts of practice. Stake (2005) put this better in his argument that the choice of case study provides a means to inquire into the practices of the activities or events being studied, while equally existing as context-dependent products of that inquiry as an account of the arrays of activity that formed and are forming practice.

Miles (2015) equally dismissed critiques of case study by declaring that it is relevant to educational practice and the research of practice, and that as a methodology, it seeks to embrace complexity in the account and analysis of practice, which is itself complex. This complexity can only be better understood through in-depth study of phenomena, which is an important strength of case study. The relevance of the contribution of case study to educational practice is therefore not so much about dwelling on generalization, rather, the robust nature of the data collected through an in-depth investigation is able to highlight important issues for educational researchers.

Flyvbjerg (2006), in responding to five “misunderstandings” of case study, argued that the general notion that theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge fails to take into the account the fact that context-dependent knowledge is more variable in the study of human affairs. He further challenged the criticism that generalization could not be carried out on the basis of an individual case, by arguing that the whole notion of generalization is being over-valued because while it may be possible in some cases, generalization is not possible or even relevant in all cases.

I recognized that the critique of case study associated with generalization is a recurring one. As a result, the alignment of my work with Merriam (1998) is more about the uniqueness of case study for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, and knowledge to which we would not otherwise have access (Merriam (1998). Merriam maintained that the rich data from a case study research has the tendency to generate infrequent or non-obvious issues that are often missed by standard statistical approaches. My research is an in-depth investigation of an important phenomenon from the perspective of one set of the important stakeholders in primary education in Nigeria (i.e. school administrators or headmasters/headmistresses). These local school administrators are the grassroots custodian and implementers of educational policy in Nigeria with very rich experiences in educational administration.

While arguing that case study research is generalizable in some come cases, Flyvbjerg (2006) equally argued that the fact “that knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not imply that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or society” (p.10). He also challenged critics who believed that case studies are not useful for hypotheses testing and theory building, maintaining that they can be used to perform both tasks and even more.

To another criticism, which suggested that case studies are often difficult to summarize, Flyvbjerg (2006) agreed that the properties of the phenomenon being studied usually in their natural setting makes it difficult to summarize case studies. Although Flyvbjerg’s position is a bold one, which I do not hold, I believe that it offers an interesting challenge to the dominant expectations of how research should be conducted and disseminated.

The Research Design

This section is concerned with the design of the current research. I described the sampling and methods of data collection used in the study.

Sampling

The targeted sample is administrators (commonly called headmasters / headmistresses) of public primary schools in Nigeria. Therefore, this section aims to discuss points regarding the research sample, especially the sampling technique and description of the research participants.

Purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was used in the recruitment of participants for this research, in this case for the exploration of participants’ and researcher’s interactions. Purposeful sampling techniques have been well described in the works of Patton (2002) as follows:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study indepth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (p. 230).

Purposeful sampling in a qualitative research has been applauded for providing solution to the research challenges such as time and resource constraints, as well as constraints associated with access to information and expertise (Suri, 2011). One of the major arguments in support of purposeful sampling is that it is not meant to be comprehensive in terms of screening all participants potentially relevant to the research. This is mainly because the interest of the researcher is not necessarily in seeking a single ‘right’ answer, but rather in attempting to examine the complexity of different

conceptualizations (Benoot, Hannes & Bilsen, 2016). This research relied on the purposeful sampling method because the cases were recruited for a specific purpose based on specific selection criteria (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005). Wellington (2000, p. 59) offered a more simplified description that “purposeful sampling involves using or making contact with a specific purpose in mind.”

Drawing on the foregoing, school administrators were identified using specific selection criteria and in accordance with the aim of the research. This aligns with Merriam (1998) who argued that purposeful sampling plays an important role in case study research as it ensures that participants with experience about the phenomenon of study are recruited to participate in the study. Morse (2000) corroborated Merriam’s assertion that an essential feature of qualitative case study research is that it involves the use of purposeful sampling methods in the recruitment of participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study. In this context, headmasters/headmistresses have been part of the implementation of the MDG and are better positioned to explain what they consider, based on their experience, to be the facilitators and barriers to the implementation of the MDG and Nigeria’s ability to meet the goal on universal primary education.

Starks and Trinidad (2007) argued that the concept or the experience under study is the unit of analysis, and that since an individual person can generate hundreds or thousands of concepts, large samples are not necessarily required to generate rich data sets. To this end, Starks and Trinidad maintained that although diverse samples can provide a broader range from which to thoroughly examine the phenomenon, data collected from respondents who have experienced the phenomenon, and who can also provide a detailed account of their experience might be sufficient. Smith and Osborn (2016) corroborated this in their argument that a research of this nature is not all about sample size as it depends on factors such as the degree of commitment of the case study level of analysis and reporting, the robust nature of individual cases, and the constraints the researcher is operating under.

Selection Criteria for Research Participants

The following criteria were applied in the selection of research participants: geo-political zones, public primary school, public primary school administrators, participation, and consent. I will now turn to addressing each criterion, accordingly.

Geo-political zone. The research design was constructed to draw sample of participants from across the six geopolitical zones to ensure representation, with a view to providing important and useful insight into the research study. Overall, 24 school administrators were selected from across the geopolitical zones, thus providing opportunities for cross case comparisons recognized by Crowe et al. (2011) as a unique advantage of qualitative case study research (see Figure 2). In order to maintain confidentiality of research participants, only points of data collection (across Nigeria’s six geo-political

zones), rather than schools are shown in Fig 2. This approach will facilitate the in-depth study of the MDG 2 and from a variety of perspectives. This is important because research focusing on the same phenomenon, conducted across multiple contexts with diverse participants has the unique advantage of providing a more robust understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

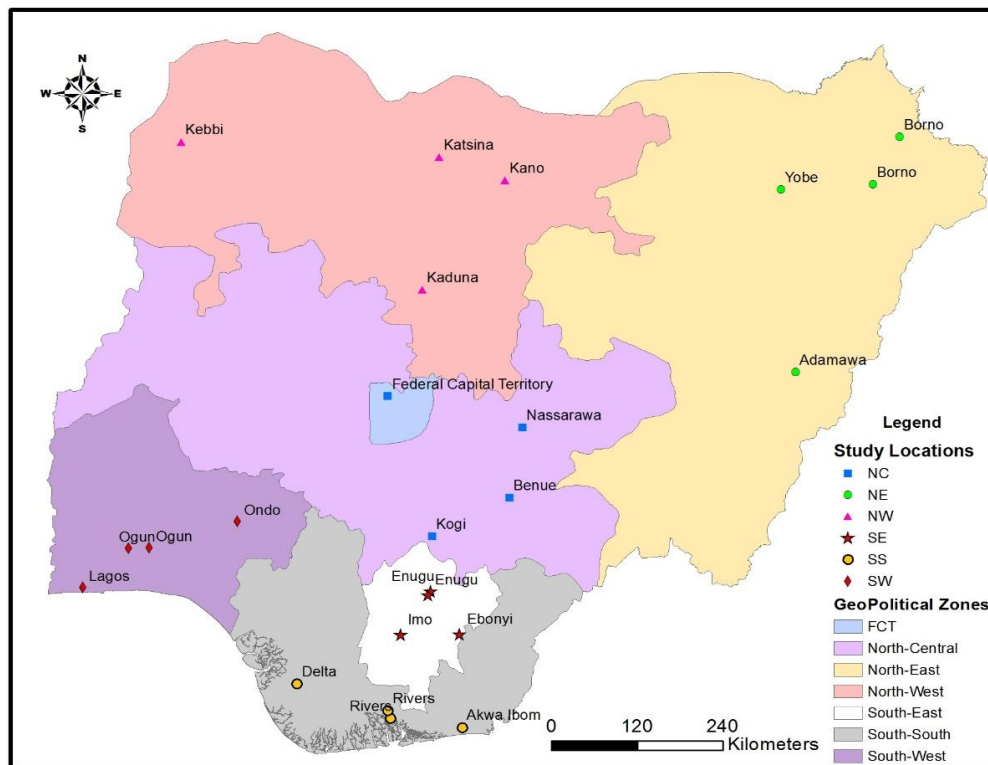


Figure 2 Nigeria showing points of data collection across geo-political zones

Source: The Author (2019)

Schools were denoted by pseudonyms in

Table 7. The table showed that the research participants at the time of the interview had spent at least 5 years in the position of a school administrator. This showed that they were experienced administrators and therefore valuable to the research.

Public primary school. The MDG 2 is concerned with achieving universal primary education: ensuring that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The focus of the MDG 2 in Nigeria from 2000-2015 was on public primary schools. Only public primary schools were therefore considered eligible to be selected for the research.

Public primary school administrators. Participation in the research was restricted to only public primary school administrators. As earlier stated in Chapter 1, although teachers have the largest impact on student achievement, school administrators are known to be key actors in the school system playing the important role of teacher supervision and school quality assurance (Madariaga, Nussbaum, & Burq, 2017). They also lead the implementation of relevant programs or initiatives with the overall aim of ensuring that excellent teaching occurs in their schools (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Donaldson, 2011; Hult, Lundstrom, & Edstrom, 2016; Meador, 2017). The administrators selected for the research were also required to have been in employment between 2000 and 2015, referred to as the MDG years.

Participation. I selected participants who willingly consented to participate in the study. Enthusiasm and willingness of the participants was considered important as it is unethical to force participation. Since participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, those with less enthusiasm were more likely to withdraw. This criterion has the potential to decrease instances of withdrawals from the research since participants showed a high sense of optimism about the research topic and participation.

Consent. I obtained participants' oral consent to voluntarily participate in the study. This is in line with my commitment to maintaining the ethical principles guiding the research, prominent among which is conformity with the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board requirement to obtain participants' informed consent.

Table 7

General information about research participants

School	Position	Length of time in position (Years)	Sex	Zone
D1	Administrator	8	F	Northcentral
D2	Administrator	6	M	
D3	Administrator	7	M	
D4	Administrator	5	M	
E1	Administrator	7	M	Northeast
E2	Administrator	5	F	
E3	Administrator	8	M	
E4	Administrator	5	F	
F1	Administrator	6	F	Northwest
F2	Administrator	10	M	
F3	Administrator	8	M	
F4	Administrator	6	M	
A1	Administrator	8	M	Southeast
A2	Administrator	6	F	
A3	Administrator	7	F	
A4	Administrator	8	F	
B1	Administrator	9	F	Southsouth
B2	Administrator	8	F	
B3	Administrator	9	F	
B4	Administrator	6	M	
C1	Administrator	7	F	Southwest
C2	Administrator	8	M	
C3	Administrator	6	M	
C4	Administrator	5	M	

Methods of Data Collection

The application of multiple methods in educational research has many advantages. For instance, studying a particular concept using a single method has the potential risk of presenting limited perspectives about the social phenomenon, which could ultimately lead to minimal research conclusions. On the other hand, studying the same phenomenon using different methods could present further information on the research context (Bryman, 2004). Since each research method has strengths and weaknesses, the application of more than one method could strengthen the findings of the research, as some methods can fill the gap created by the limitations of other methods (Clark & Creswell, 2008). A unique advantage of using more than one method is that it can facilitate the triangulation of the research data, thereby strengthening its quality and overall conclusion (Flick, 2009).

Drawing on the foregoing, I therefore adopted semi-structured interviews and document analysis as methods of data collection in the current study. These are effective techniques for answering the research question with rich data. I also took notes on important issues or points raised by the interviewees during the interview that were further probed by the researcher to gather additional data. The aim of the next section is to provide a rationale for the adoption of these methods.

Interview Method

Interview is one of the most popular techniques of data collection in qualitative research, as it accords researchers the desired access to informants' beliefs and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Del-ben (2004) identified three categories of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Structured interview involves prearrangement of questions with fixed wordings and strict adherence to the wordings. The method has the potential to constrain the freedom of participants during an interview, and ultimately resulting in missed opportunities to collect rich data. An unstructured interview is the direct opposite as it enables the interviewee to speak to a number of issues without constraint and minimal control by the researcher. A semi-structured interview maintains a balance between the researcher and interviewee's control. The researcher has predetermined domains of focus and equally flexible at the same time as the questions are subject to change and modifications during the interview. I will briefly explain semi-structured and document analysis, which are relevant to my work.

Semi-structured Interview. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility as it gives the researcher freedom to amend or adjust the questions during interviews in order to probe far beyond respondents' answers to the interview questions (Luo & Wildemuth, 2009). Smith and Osborn (2016) argued that the researcher often has a set of interview questions, but the interview itself is normally guided by the questions rather than be dictated by it. An essential feature of this kind of interview is the building of rapport with the respondent, which often makes the ordering of questions less important.

The respondent is more relaxed thereby giving the researcher the opportunity to probe interesting areas that might arise from the interview. Furthermore, the respondent's interests or concerns can drive this kind of interview. At the same time, there is a desire by the researcher to enter into the social world of the participant. The rapport already built will encourage the participant to cooperate more closely in whatever direction the interview takes. The respondent can introduce a relevant issue the researcher had not considered. Smith and Osborn (2016) maintained that in such a situation, the participant can be seen as an experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be given the maximum opportunity to tell their story.

The semi-structured interview has unique advantages in the facilitation of rapport or empathy. It also promotes greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interviewer to explore novel areas, with the tendency to generate rich data. Its disadvantage lies in the reduction of the control the researcher has over the situation. Even though the researcher might not have total control, he still ensures that the direction of the interview aligns directly or indirectly with the main focus of the research. The interview is also time-consuming.

The advantages inherent in semi-structured interview position it as the most effective choice for my research. An investigation of the facilitators and constraints to a major development program like the MDG from the experience of headmasters/headmistresses requires a flexible approach to generate robust data as highlighted by Merriam (1988). The implication of this is that a study of this nature needs to employ flexible methods that allows for exploration of novel areas that would make for a post MDG era. Therefore, I used semi-structured interviews in this research, and it created the needed flexibility, which made it convenient for the interviewees. The interviews with different headmasters/headmistresses from different schools and zones in Nigeria, therefore, contributed different perspectives, which were helpful in addressing the research question, while adding more insight into the work. The interviews provided a platform through which I posed probing questions about issues and themes identified in the literature. It also provided the participants an opportunity to discuss other fringe issues that were not covered by my questions, but were deemed important to understanding the issues. An example includes the role of nepotism in the appointment of school administrators as a constraint to the implementation of the MDG 2 on education.

Piloting of Interviews. I explored interview piloting to develop and refine the research method during the first three weeks of June 2018. While making contact with research participants and working with them to schedule interviews, I piloted interviews to save time and set the scene for actual data collection. The exercise enabled me to modify some of my interview guide questions and overall approach to the research. For instance, some of the school administrators interviewed in the piloting

stage were reluctant to have the researcher visit their schools as they were more comfortable with the telephone interview. Others preferred not to speak to whether or not they were indigenes of the town in which their schools were located. I later gathered during the interviews that some states prefer to appoint an indigene to head schools even when a non-indigene might be more qualified. I modified the questions accordingly. I was able to understand the need for better refinement of the interview guiding questions. The interview piloting exercise aligns with Robson's (2002) argument that pilot study serves as a preliminary trial of the main study to illustrate its practicality. Piloting of interviews is an important activity that helps researchers to refine data collection plans through both the content and practical applications of the data (Yin, 2009). The piloting also enabled me to examine a number of issues such as an estimation of the time required to conduct the study, clarification of confusing and ambiguous questions, check practical applications, and was able to fix technical issues such as volume of the voice recorder.

The pilot study, therefore, enabled me to address and revise possible difficulties with data collection practices and refine the research methods and their practical administration. This aligns with May's (2011) advice that pilot study enables researchers to better understand whether or not the research tools are able to measure what they were designed for, and whether the participants in the pilot study would encounter any challenge in the process. I selected participants for the pilot study from other schools that were not targets for the actual data collection. I subsequently applied similar ethical standards to what I used in the actual data collection with research participants.

Telephone Interview. A telephone interview facilitates interpersonal communication without a face-to-face meeting (Carr & Worth, 2001) and is a cost effective alternative to face-to-face interviews. In addition, telephone interview was a preferred option identified from the pilot interviews and initial contact with research participants in this research. Many participants on learning that the researcher was based in Canada strongly advised that there was no guarantee that they will be available during her visit for a face-to-face interview and felt that it was better to arrange a convenient time for a telephone interview. The option also became the most cost effective, as the researcher was able to interview more participants than the six (6) initially proposed. As a deviation from the concerns of the opponents of telephone interview, the research participants talked openly and freely and were able to direct the conversation to areas that they perceived as important. This aligned with the reflections of Vogl (2013) that telephone interviews create a more balanced distribution of power between interview participants. Vogl also argued that the ethical requirements guiding researchers to avoid being biased and stereotyping interviewees based on visual traits and behaviours cannot necessarily be said of interviewees who do not have any stake in the interview. Potential discriminations based on age, status or physical appearance, which would have been a distraction were therefore eliminated through the use

of telephone interview. While rapport building is good, Tucker and Parker (2014) argued that face-to-face interview has the risk of encouraging excessive rapport, which has the potential to make discussions drift away and lose focus. Telephone interview in this research therefore helped to maintain an appreciable degree of distance and formality in the interview, while it still created and maintained rapport with research participants. Studies have also indicated that interview participants when presented with options often prefer telephone to face-to-face interview and it further supports researchers' pledge to respect their privacy and anonymity (Holt, 2010).

The telephone interview as used in this research was able to generate rich data as participants felt it provided them with greater sense of privacy than face-to-face contact as equally expressed by Vogl (2013). The researcher's promise of confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms encouraged interviewees to talk more openly and freely. The telephone interview made it possible to interview participants some of whom might have been shy and not comfortable with a face-to-face interview. Tucker and Parker (2014) argued that shy people often avoid face-to-face interview interactions and the social pressure that often comes with it. As a self-sponsored student, this also enabled the researcher to overcome the challenges of time and costs associated with travelling, accommodation, food, and other logistics.

A major criticism of telephone interview is the lack of visual access, which has the potential to lead to loss of important non-verbal visual data (Gillham, 2005; Hermanowicz, 2002; Novick, 2008). I overcame part of this by committing to exceptional listening skills. By carefully listening to interviewees, I was able to pick on both verbal and non-verbal cues such as pauses, tone of voice, and hurried responses. This enabled me to determine whether the participant was confused or frustrated or hesitating. Qu and Dumay (2011) identified sharpening of listening skills as a strategy that has enabled researchers to overcome challenges associated with the absence of visual cues during telephone interviews. Where interviewees appeared confused, I was able to explain and gain their understanding. By speaking slowly, interviewees were able to hear me and I also heard them. I rephrased questions, used probes and prompts to extract more in-depth data.

The researcher realized that silence played two important roles during the pilot study. While it minimized interruptions and enabled the interviewee to speak, it also created a situation whereby the participant thought the interviewer's (researcher's) phone had gone off. I addressed this by applying acknowledgement strategies such as gently saying 'okay', 'right', 'yeah' while the interviewee spoke as recommended by Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2012). It also reassured the interviewee that the interviewer (researcher) was listening and paying attention to their submissions.

Rapport building during the telephone Interview. During the process of recruiting interviewees, the interviewer had the opportunity to converse over the telephone with potential study participants (Hermanowicz, 2002). This allowed the researcher to achieve four key objectives. First, the conversation provided an opportunity for the researcher to explain the nature and purpose of the study, the background of the researcher and the interview as a mode of data collection. I discussed details of the information they wanted to know about the research, e.g., what the study is for and how it may affect them. I also provided another option by asking them if they had an email access so I could send them information about the research in case they preferred that. Furthermore, a telephone conversation allowed the researcher to immediately address any misunderstandings or reservations that the participant may have. Once these concerns were addressed, interviewees were more willing and ready to share their views and experiences with the interviewer. The conversation was open and free flowing, which is the aim of building rapport.

Second, the researcher attempted to converse with participants in a friendly yet professional manner. The careful use of tone and wording allowed the researcher to build rapport with interviewees. Participants spoke about the weather in Nigeria, while most of them excitedly spoke to the weather in Canada even though they had never visited the country, and how it is believed to be the coldest nation on earth, with an all year round freezing temperatures. Others were curious to understand how the researcher is able to survive in that kind of temperature. Some asked questions about snow and how they learned that Canada has the highest amount of snow anywhere in the world. The researcher showed genuine interest in the tales about the Nigerian weather and delightedly provided explanations about Canadian seasons, while building rapport in the process.

Third, the researcher attempted to present the subject/topic of research as interesting and exciting. The topic of investigation was for the interview participants their “bread and butter” as echoed by one participant. “Bread and butter” is a common idiomatic expression in Nigeria that describes a high degree of knowledge and familiarity with a subject matter. There was a great deal of familiarity with the basic components of the research among most of the participants. For many of them these are issues they have been dealing with for quite a long time, especially among administrators that have been serving for a long period of time, some even before the MDGs were declared. Many felt passionately about the topic of investigation. Thus participation was encouraged by informing participants how their contribution to the research can be beneficial for society as suggested by Chapple (1999). Furthermore, participants were informed that the findings of the research would be shared with them. Thus, participation and sharing of insights and knowledge would be beneficial to all.

Fourth, the interview was presented as a conversation in which the interviewee shared their experiences and views. Through this, the researcher was able to overcome any misconceptions or stereotypical views by distinguishing, in a subtle and indirect manner, the research and the interview from an intrusive newspaper or magazine interview.

The pre-interview telephone conversation enabled the researcher to answer questions and offer clarifications on the study and other issues of interest to the interviewees. The researcher answered all questions during the interview without asking interviewees to wait to the end. This demonstrated respect and further encouraged participation. I was able to achieve all these without a face-to-face meeting.

An outline of the type of questions I asked research participants are presented as follows:

- Please tell me about your understanding of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal primary education.
- Was there any type of support your school received towards implementation of the MDG on universal primary education?
- What are the benefits of the MDG on universal primary education to your school?
- What are the problems/challenges you encountered with this MDG in your school?
- Would you say the program was a success or a failure? Please tell me why you think so.

A full list of sample questions can be found in appendix A. I conducted 24 interviews between June and August 2018, with each interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is helpful either as a primary method of data collection in many different fields of research or as a compliment to other methods (Bowen, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Researchers collect documents because many organizations have a significant amount of documents and records, which highlight their past and current status, with some of the documents in the public domain and accessible online (Bryman, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Analysis of document is an efficient and effective way of gathering data because documents by their nature are manageable and practical resources. They are also more cost and time efficient than many other techniques (Bowen, 2009). These documents may include but are not limited to reports at either an institutional or national and international levels, which may be available in paper format, or on computer files, or in video and audio formats. Mertens (2010) maintained that researchers often rely on these documents and records for background information to gain better insight into their research. O’Leary (2014) identified three primary types of documents, namely:

1. Public records: This is an official record of an organization's on-going activities. Such activities include mission statements, student transcripts, policy manual, strategic plans, syllabi, student hand book, etc.
2. Personal Documents: This is an account of a person's actions, beliefs or experiences. Examples of this include blogs, emails, incident reports, reflections/journals, newspapers or scrapbooks.
3. Physical evidence: Artifacts found within the study setting are often referred to as physical evidence. These include handbooks, flyers, training materials, posters, etc.

Public records featured in my work. Specifically, I collected data on primary school enrollment across Nigeria's six geo-political zones from the Federal Ministry of Education; and data on Nigeria's performance in relation to the MDG 2 on education from the Millennium Development Goal Office. I also collected data on the state of primary education in Nigeria and associated challenges from UN public records and the Nigerian National Policy on Education document.

Bryman (2012) opined that documents speak to certain things that go on in an organization thereby helping researchers to gain an understanding of its culture. Review of the documents earlier mentioned provided rich background information and broad coverage of data thereby helping me to further contextualize my research as indicated by Bowen (2009). The insights provided by the documents were helpful during my interviews as I was able to probe and collect first hand data from research participants based on pieces of information I gathered from them.

As the driver of this research, I remained committed to the acceptable level of analysis and reporting. From the outset, the choice of headmasters/headmistresses was expected to help generate a rich depth of data. Time and resource constraints made it difficult for me to interview all the primary schools' administrators in all the 36 states of Nigeria. Smith and Osborn (2016) further argued that case studies have been successfully published with samples of one, four, nine, fifteen and more participants. While there has been a trend for studies being conducted with very small number of participants, its most prominent feature is the commitment to detailed interpretative account of cases, and researchers agree that this can only be realistically achieved on small samples (Smith & Osborn, 2016).

The Role of Interviews and Document Analysis in this Research

The research design (Figure 3) further presents the research objectives and the methods of data collection and analysis matching each objective.

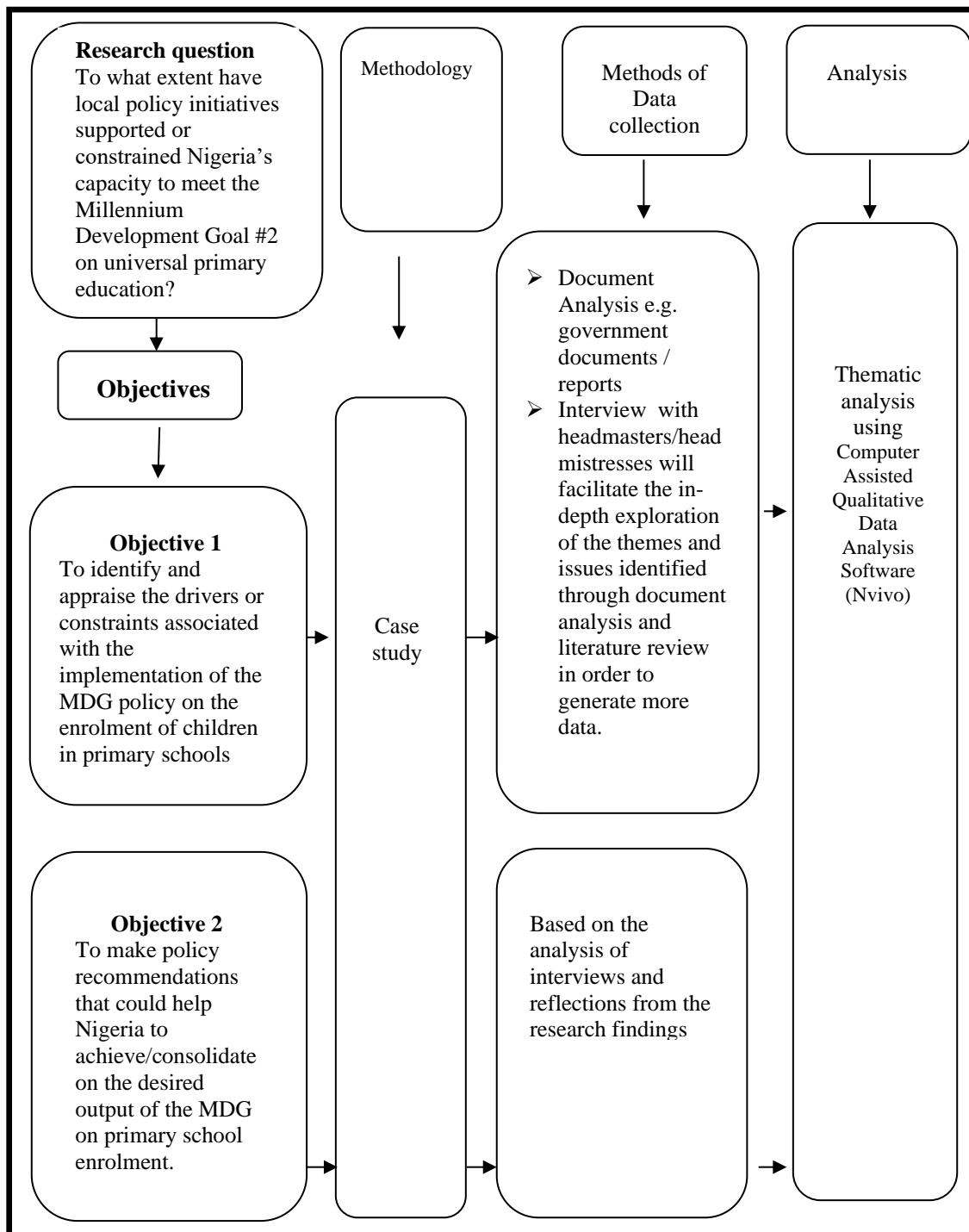


Figure 3 Research design

This study was based on data collection from several sources to match the various research objectives as presented in Figure 3. Data relating to the identification and appraisal of drivers or constraints associated with the implementation of the MDG policy on the enrolment of children in primary schools were through document analysis, and interviews.

I collected data to inform policy recommendations that could help Nigeria to achieve/consolidate on the desired output of the MDG policy on universal primary education through interviews and research findings. I adopted a multi-faceted approach to data collection that includes semi-structured interviews, and document analysis in alignment with Merriam (1998), to provide a more robust data.

These data collection tools complemented each other and effectively addressed the research question. Administrators at the primary school level in Nigeria called headmasters/headmistresses were the main focus of the interviews. As earlier explained, while k-12 school administrators are called Principals in Canada, the situation is different in Nigeria. Nevertheless, their roles and responsibilities are the same. A principal or headmaster/headmistress is the highest-ranking administrator in an elementary, primary, middle, or high school. They are responsible for the overall operation of their schools and for helping teachers to improve teaching thereby contributing to the overall learning experience for students. These administrators are equally responsible for leading school reforms, program implementation, and facilitating interactions with parents, guardian and stakeholders in the community (Meador, 2017). They represent their schools when dealing with governments, report on performance, and often lead the implementation of government programs in their schools.

Document analysis as earlier pointed out provided a solid background to inform some of the interview questions. The interviews confirm some of the information outlined in documents. In this way, document analysis was helpful as part of triangulation, which is the combination of methods in a research focusing on the same phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). Researchers in order to seek convergence and collaboration often use at least two resources through different data sources and methods. The whole essence of triangulation, according to Bowen (2009), is to provide a confluence of evidence that speaks to credibility. Corroboration of findings across data sets has the tendency to reduce the impact of potential bias by examining information collected through different methods. I drew on universal basic education policy document, Nigeria's national policy on education document, United Nations reports on primary education in Nigeria, as well as the MDG endpoint report on Nigeria with specific focus on goal 2, which deals with universal primary education.

Data Analysis

The review of qualitative research literature enabled the researcher to identify several data analysis strategies. Miles and Huberman (1994) as cited in Alsahou (2015) suggested three procedural analytic stages: management, reduction, and data display. The management stage is concerned with systematic raw data retrieval in phases. These include transcribing, editing and recording of notes. Others include inserting of data in computer or textual records.

The reduction stage draws on the researchers' review of the data and notes about codes induced from the data. The data display entails grouping the codes into segments and concluding based on the segments. These three analytical stages were relevant to this study because they facilitated the seamless analysis of the raw data. Drawing on these stages, I was able to derive meaningful and justifiable interpretations.

The analysis of research data was based on induction since it was developed according to an open coding process to establish preliminary themes without recourse to literature or any pre-determined categories. This approach was equally used by Alsahou (2015) to derive themes and categories from raw data through retrieval, reproduction, and classification of the preliminary themes. Separating the data analysis phase from the data collection phase is usually difficult. To manage this, researchers interact with the collected data by adding notes, transcribing interviews, and defining a preliminary impression of transcripts (Maxwell, 1996). Therefore, the researcher focused on preparation of the raw data, transcription of the audio data, retrieval of the data and research questions, and application of a software programme as recommended by Alsahou (2015). I classified and labelled the raw data in accordance with each case context, followed by transcription of audio materials from the 24 interviews. After organizing the data, I engaged with the responses to develop an initial understanding of the researched contexts.

Another step involved a software programme which facilitated better presentation of the data in a manner the researcher was able to draw on responses as needed. This aligns with Flick's (2009) reasoning that researchers have several expectations in the application of software programmes when analyzing qualitative data. Given the unique nature of software programmes in qualitative research, I will provide some explanations on their use and application in this research:

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. Data analysis is the most complex phase of a qualitative study (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). Since the handling of qualitative data is often overwhelming, mostly involving large volumes of paperwork (Houghton et al., 2015), the emergence of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is to help with the handling, storage and manipulation of such data (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafi, 2003; MacMillan & Koenig, 2004; Silverman, 2010; Thorne, 2000). Lathlean (2010) argued that CAQDAS such as NVivo allows for quick and easy retrieval of data, and provides a comprehensive approach to management. However, I understand the inability of the software to understand or give meaning to text as noted by Bringer, Johnston, and Brackenridge (2004), and therefore applied analytical skills to fill that gap.

Nvivo was the preferred software for my analysis because it allows researchers to manage data and ideas and equally query the data as recommended by Bazeley (2007). The Nvivo software enabled me to analyze within and across case analyses, which Bassett (2010) identified as among the important factors that makes the software appropriate for case study research. Within-case analysis supports the research by providing a detailed description of each case and themes within it, while cross-case analysis helps with the analysis of themes across cases to highlight similarities and differences (Creswell, 1998). Nvivo, like other CAQDAS, can equally enhance transparency and rigour (Crowley, Harre, & Tagg, 2002), which I consider to be very important features to help with the analysis of the in-depth data collected for this research. The availability of a variety of search and retrieval tools called queries enabled me to ask questions and test emerging themes as highlighted by Bassett (2010).

The amount of data collected through interviews is very large when compared to quantitative data collection. Researchers often find organization and analysis of the data very problematic (Bassett, 2010). One of the most advanced data analysis packages, computer assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo, assists in the manipulation of data records, browsing, coding, and interpreting them. It equally provides quick and accurate access to data records (Bassett, 2010). Flick (2009) argued that software programmes in qualitative data analysis are primarily concerned with saving time, enhancing data management, and facilitating the data representation.

Kelle (2000) identified six steps before analyzing empirical materials using a software programme. These are: (1) formatting textual data; (2) carrying out open coding; (3) writing memos and attaching them to text segments; (4) comparing text segments to which the same codes have been attached; (5) integrating codes and attaching memos to codes; and (6) developing core categories (cited in Flick, 2009, p. 368). A qualitative data analysis not only deals with textual materials, but also enables the user to analyze audio materials. All these facilities encouraged the researcher to apply the NVivo 12 programme.

Coding stage. This stage deals with the main analytic activities with the research data. Coding is generally used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories and is used to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation (Alsahou, 2015; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Since it is important to make a decision about how the researcher will code and identify themes, the thematic analysis model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as cited in Alsahou (2015) was adopted in the current study. This is important, as the approach is flexible and able to provide a rich and detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Merriam (2002) equally supported this approach in her argument that researchers need to compare codes from data sets to look for similar themes and recurring patterns. It also helped in identifying and understanding common

themes emerging from individual opinions, beliefs and attitudes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that qualitative data could be analyzed using six steps.

Step 1 is the familiarization stage, which aligns with the management stage in which the researcher became familiar with the data. The researcher familiarized herself with the raw data by listening to the verbal data and reviewing the accuracy of transcripts, rereading the raw data, and writing general notes and indicators to be used in the subsequent steps. The researcher recorded her thoughts in the form of memos. Writing memos has been recognized for its importance in guiding researchers the management and making sense of various answers, thereby facilitating the process of coding responses and identifying key themes (Wellington, 2000). Generating preliminary codes is the second step in the open-coding process. The codes are attached to the segments of the data to classify and label different units of meanings and ideas. These codes summarized the segments of the data, such as phrases, words, sentences, or whole answers. The researcher reviewed the data and created the codes without predetermined categories or themes by focusing on the entire data without recourse to the findings and conclusions of previous studies.

Step 3 involved the search for themes. The emergence of themes or categories is a result of assembling these codes into smaller numbers of sets, themes, or constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes were therefore sorted, according to their relevance, into clusters.

Step 4 involved the review of themes during which I refined and reconsidered some themes not supported with enough codes for their viability as themes. I also broke down other themes to create sub-themes. I equally integrated some themes to create unified themes because their codes shared similar meanings. As a result, the nominated themes produced in the previous step were subject to improvement. In the current research, I refined the themes and categories by checking the relevance of codes to each theme and differentiated among the themes. This step commonly called iterative process (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003) enables the researcher to reread all codes and themes and then compare them with the raw data set. The purpose of this step is to form a coherent pattern within each theme as well as distinctive and identifiable units of meanings across themes.

Step 5 is the defining and naming of themes, which is known for leading to a further and deeper development of the themes or categories. Alsahou (2015) noted that the act of defining and refining implies an identification of the essence of what each theme and the overall themes connotes and determination of what aspect of the data each theme captures. In this research therefore, I described each theme and its role with respect to the whole data. In this step, thematic connections became clearer and identifiable, in turn developing and demonstrating the story beyond the raw data.

The sixth step involves production of the report. This deals with providing answers to the research question and drawing evidence based conclusions from the data. I explored the cross-case synthesis (thematic) and within-case analysis (case studies) approaches in answering the research question in the current study. This is also supported by Alsahou's (2015) reasoning that the cross-cases synthesis accumulates the themes and categories of the cases to define similarities and differences among them. In this respect, synthesizing themes and codes across cases can support similar clusters, identify new clusters, and draw conclusions from multiple contexts.

Reflexivity and Ethics

In qualitative case studies, researchers are required to clarify their role in the research process (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). This is because the researcher is involved in all stages of the study from defining a concept to design, interview, transcription, analysis, and reporting. What this means is that whenever instruments are involved in qualitative research, a human being will be an integral part of the process (Fink, 2000). Reflexivity, as used here, is a term that describes the researcher's awareness of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Robson (2002) earlier argued that the concept helps in the identification of areas of potential bias and strategies to overcome them. I am cognizant of my background as a teacher, which means I would interact with school administrators (some of whom might have been teachers), and who could engage more with me without recourse to power imbalances. By power imbalances here I mean fear of being penalized by a superior officer for not granting access or intimidation of a very junior novice researcher who had never interacted with staff in a primary school setting. Let me note that my background as a primary school classroom teacher in Nigeria, and a professional educationist made it easier for me to approach the school administrators for data collection. A student without previous teaching experience in Nigeria might struggle to get audience with the participants I interviewed. My knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation as gathered from documents as part of my background reading positioned me to better answer, satisfactorily, questions that came up during data collection. However, I have never worked in the MDGs office and cannot claim extensive knowledge of the MDG 2 in Nigeria. With respect to the MDGs therefore, I am an outsider with an open mind, ready and willingly abided by the ethical standards guiding researchers.

Simon (2009) counseled on the need for researchers to show empathy and be responsive to the concerns of participants. I took note of this before embarking on data collection following Simon's admonition to avoid coming across as only being interested in receiving information. Since the research process involves both researchers and participants investing their identities in the research, the case for empathy and being responsive to participants' concerns has the tendency to create a positive space for

learning and growing for both parties. Although it is good to build rapport and maintain positive relationship with participants, the relationship that is established between the researchers and participants in qualitative studies can raise a range of different ethical concerns and dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations (Warusznski, 2002). Some important ethical concerns that should be considered while carrying out qualitative research include anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). It thus became important for me to minimize the possibility of intrusion into the autonomy of study participants by all means. I specified to participants in advance, in comprehensible language, which data were to be collected and how they were to be used (Hoeyer, Dahlager, & Lynoe, 2005; Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Sheraghi, 2014).

Ethics is of great significance for research of this nature and requires critical reflection on the self as a researcher and the multiple identities that represent the self in a research setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Ethics includes an understanding of myself as an undeniable part of the research, and clearly highlighting how I will build the entire research process to demonstrate its trustworthiness and rigour as suggested by Hadi and Closs (2016), and Dunne, Pryor, and Yates (2005). I believe that giving voice to one of the stakeholders in education is a demonstration of my commitment to empowering the research participants in the construction of the text. Similarly, my role as the researcher helped to structure their views to facilitate meaningful academic discourse. In order to do this, I continually presented evidence that my intentions and actions would not influence the research findings in a lopsided way. I also find the position of Simon (2009) quite helpful that “the more elaborate approach to adopt in qualitative inquiry is to acknowledge its inherent subjectivity and concentrate on demonstrating how your values, predispositions and feelings impact upon research” (p.163). She maintained that qualitative researchers should not focus so much on trying to get rid of subjectivity, rather, we need to recognize when it can become a bias and take steps to prevent those biases. As the researcher and moderator therefore, I do know that I have a responsibility to be mindful of subjectivities and monitored them by being reflexive to evaluate the role they are playing in the research.

Guba (1981) identified credibility as one criterion to be considered by qualitative researchers in the pursuit of a trustworthy study. He maintained that one of the most important factors in trustworthiness is by ensuring credibility. There are several strategies to demonstrate credibility by researchers in order to show that they have correctly recorded the phenomena under investigation to minimize bias. Some of these include the choice of research methods considered to be well established in qualitative investigation. Yin (1994) recognized the need to use the correct method for the concept under study. The two methods used for data collection i.e. interviews and document analysis are acceptable methods used in case study research. I familiarized myself with participants early before

the initial data collection activities took place as a demonstration of credibility. This proactive engagement between the participants and myself helped us to gain an adequate understanding of the phenomena and establish a relationship of trust. I maintained certain degree of caution to avoid making too many demands on participants.

Other ways I minimized bias as well as the potential for coercion is by ensuring that research participants were given the option to refuse participation in the study. The requirement of all researchers by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board in this regard is a demonstration of the importance attached to respect for the rights of participants. This helped to promote honesty since data collection involved only those that were genuinely interested and willing to take part and prepared to share their thought and experience. While building rapport, researchers need to be frank by indicating that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions that would be asked. I also emphasized the independent status of the researcher.

I recognized the need to uphold participants' confidentiality and privacy as essential norms for researchers and enforced it. As earlier mentioned, I re-assured participants of the confidentiality of information before commencement of data collection that neither their real names nor the institutions where data was collected would be identified in the reporting of research findings. I emphasized their right to withdraw from the research anytime without prior explanation and equally re-assured them that all data would be confidential and protected with a password in my computer, and that I would only share it with my supervisory team. I also clearly explained to the participants that the audio recorder option is to minimize loss of information and to save time, and that only my supervisory team and I would listen to the interviews. I equally offered another option to participants who might not comfortable with voice recorders, that I would manually take notes, which again will only be shared with my supervisory team. The openness and demonstration of respect for whatever works best for them made many participants to agree to recording of their interviews. As part of anonymity of participants, I re-assured participants that I will use pseudonyms during reporting of the study findings and remove identifier component to avoid mentioning their names or revealing their identities in any way. Sanjari et al. (2014) encouraged this in their strategy for protecting research participants. To protect the possibility of identifying the institutions or research participants, I referred to them by pseudonyms.

I also minimized bias through frequent debriefings with each participant at the end of interview sessions. The essence of this is to broaden my vision as they bring to bear their experiences and perceptions, which could lead to a refinement of approaches or help to develop ideas and interpretations with the overall aim of helping to identify potential biases and eliminate them as suggested by Shenton (2004). Opportunities for peer scrutiny of the research as well as my reflective commentary are ways

to promote credibility of the research and eliminate bias. The latter helped me to examine the initial impression of each data collection session and an appraisal of the effectiveness of the techniques employed. Guba and Lincoln (1981) described this as progressive subjectivity or the monitoring of the researcher's own developing constructions, which are considered critical in establishing credibility in qualitative case study research.

Also important from the outset to minimize bias is the need for the researcher to have the suitable background, qualifications and experience to undertake the research. This is because the credibility of the researcher is of utmost importance in qualitative research since he is the major instrument of data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990). I have the requisite experience in this regard which led to a successful data collection exercise.

As earlier mentioned, with the combination of interview field notes and recording device, I minimized the risk of loss of information. I equally explore peer review process identified by Merriam (1998) as another way to minimize bias in case study research. This involves asking colleagues who are either familiar with the research or new to the topic to examine the raw data and determine whether the findings are a true reflection of the data. I am, however, ultimately responsible for the analysis of my data and subsequent interpretation.

I drew on Mander's (2010) advice to researchers to remain non-judgmental and therefore not act in any way that could be perceived to be taking an overtly or covertly moral position. I ensured that throughout the research process, I maintained a high degree of patience, readiness and willingness to learn from participants and respect their views even if I do not agree with such views. I realized prior to commencement of this research that I have an obligation to conduct a good research, which Christians (2005) argued involves 'intellectual honesty, the suppression of personal bias, careful collection and accurate reporting' (p. 159). I also adhered to good practice as expected of university of Calgary researchers. The fact that I opted for thematic analysis rather than presentation of individual stories as well as the use of pseudonyms is a demonstration of confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. This will also minimize bias since the process as noted by Corbin and Strauss (2008) allows researchers to put aside preconceived notions about what they expect to find in the research thereby letting the data and its interpretation guide the analysis.

I am very aware of Miles and Huberman's (1994) argument that interpretivist researchers are no more separated from their objects of study than their informants are. The implication of this is that the researchers' own convictions, conceptual orientation, and understandings may influence how they interpret the data. The use of a variety of tools for data collection was able to minimize this. I used interviews and documents in this study because of my strong belief that they would help to address the

research objectives rather than my personal views. With my background as a former teacher in Nigerian primary schools and a professional educationist, I remained constantly on guard and prevented my personal beliefs and experiences to cloud the data and discussions. This is because I am interested in bringing these stakeholders' voices to the fore by clearly presenting their views, not as an advocate, but a researcher. There is the possibility that my research findings might be pleasing to some people and not pleasing to others, but the essence is not about pleasing or displeasing an individual. Rather, it is about highlighting primary education in Nigeria following the MDG from the perspective of school administrators, with a view to sustaining what is working and improving on it and identifying what is not working to correct it.

An ethics application submitted to the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculty Research Ethics Board (CFREB) was approved prior to commencing data collection. No further authorization was required from the Nigerian government. However, I had letters of introduction signed by my supervisor, which highlighted a brief high-level overview of my research.

Participants were informed of the purpose, methods as well as intended possible uses of the research prior to participation. I also explained the implication of their participation in the research and associated risks. Given the nature of this research, which only dealt with adult participants, no risk was identified. I equally requested participants' permission before recording interviews and re-assured them of confidentiality. I explained this prior to commencement of the interview to re-assure participants of protection from any potential repercussion associated with publication of research findings while clearly giving them the option to freely participate or withdraw at any point without explanation. Following a clear explanation of the main objectives of research, I sought and obtained the participants' informed consent, verbally, prior to commencement of the interview. All interviews were conducted in English since the official language of instruction in Nigerian primary schools is English.

Challenges of Data Collection and Analysis

The limitations associated with data collection and analysis are as follows:

- a) The study adopted an intensive data collection regime that involved in-depth interviews. The focus here is not about large number of respondents but the depth and intensity of data to generate from participants. In-depth interviews are time consuming and resources-demanding, but rewardingly comprehensive. Spreading the data collection and conducting interviews across the 36 states in Nigeria would task both the resources and time available, and equally have the tendency to significantly impact on the degree of comprehensive coverage of the data collection process. My choice of in-depth interviews in this research is more about comprehensive data (Merriam, 1998) rather than wider coverage. Understanding the problem

in more depth therefore was the deciding factor in my decision to keep the number of school administrators to 24 to enable an in-depth analysis of the problem.

- b) Transcription of data was time consuming as the researcher ensured that data were transcribed verbatim as received from the research participants.
- c) There were instance where interviews were re-scheduled at short notice to accommodate participants' program. This prolonged the period of data collection.

Chapter summary

I have highlighted the methodology for my research in this chapter. The main point is that this research is driven by the interpretivist worldview and a case study methodology. This methodology aligns with my decision to conduct an in-depth investigation of the lived experiences of primary school administrators as the central focus of my research. I applied purposeful sampling as it enabled me to focus only on public primary schools, which is the main focus of MDG 2 as opposed to private primary schools. Through the sampling method, I equally selected school administrators in public primary schools across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, and conducted 24 interviews in total, which translates to four interviews per geo-political zone. I am familiar with concerns around bias in qualitative research and was able to highlight measures I employed to help check them like other qualitative studies.

The results and discussions of research findings are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Four - Presentation of Research Findings

Four overarching findings emerged from the data as shown in Figure 4. First, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 on universal primary education in Nigeria was characterised by a disconnect between policy and practice at different levels. Second, sociocultural factors also influenced the effectiveness of implementation. Third, there were a number of socioeconomic drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2. Finally, sociopolitical factors equally emerged among the findings from the data. Taken together, the nature of the findings suggests that the official policy of the MDG 2 was inextricably tied to the political, economic, and local lived experiences in both urban and rural Nigeria.

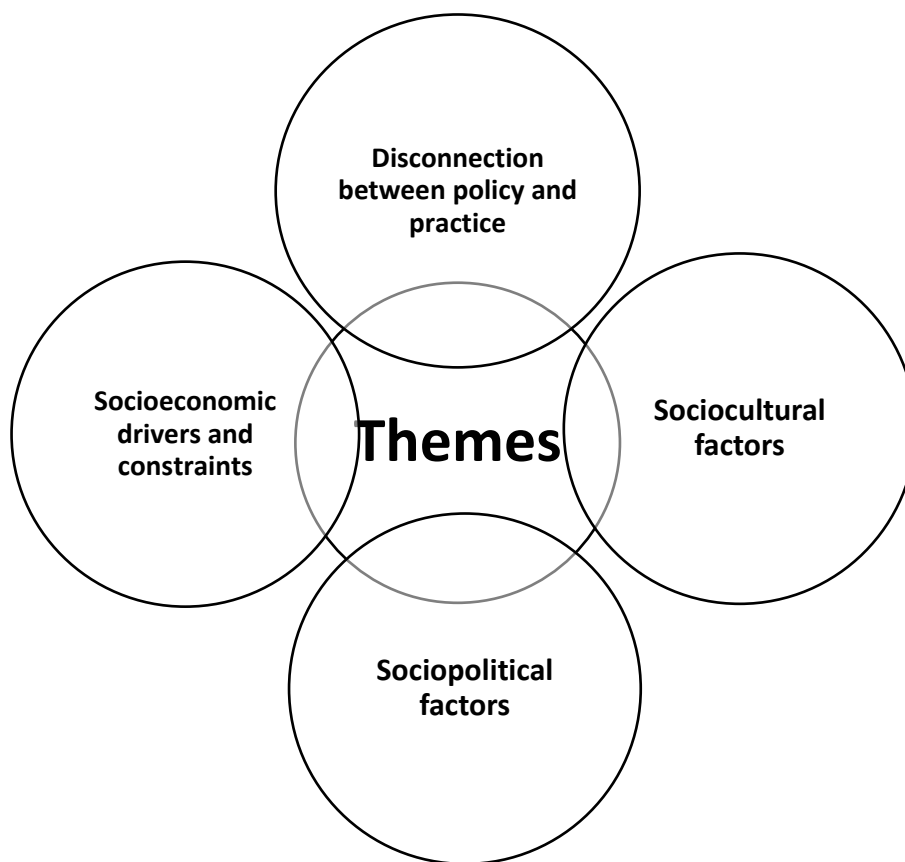


Figure 4 Research Themes

Disconnect between Policy and Practice

The research found disconnects between policy and practice at different levels in relation to the implementations of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 and universal basic education (UBE). These disconnects presented in Figure 5 are explained within the broad themes of the role

that the Universal Basic Education Policy has on the implementation of the MDG 2, the Early Childhood Education Policy and MDG 2, and stakeholder participation in education policy.

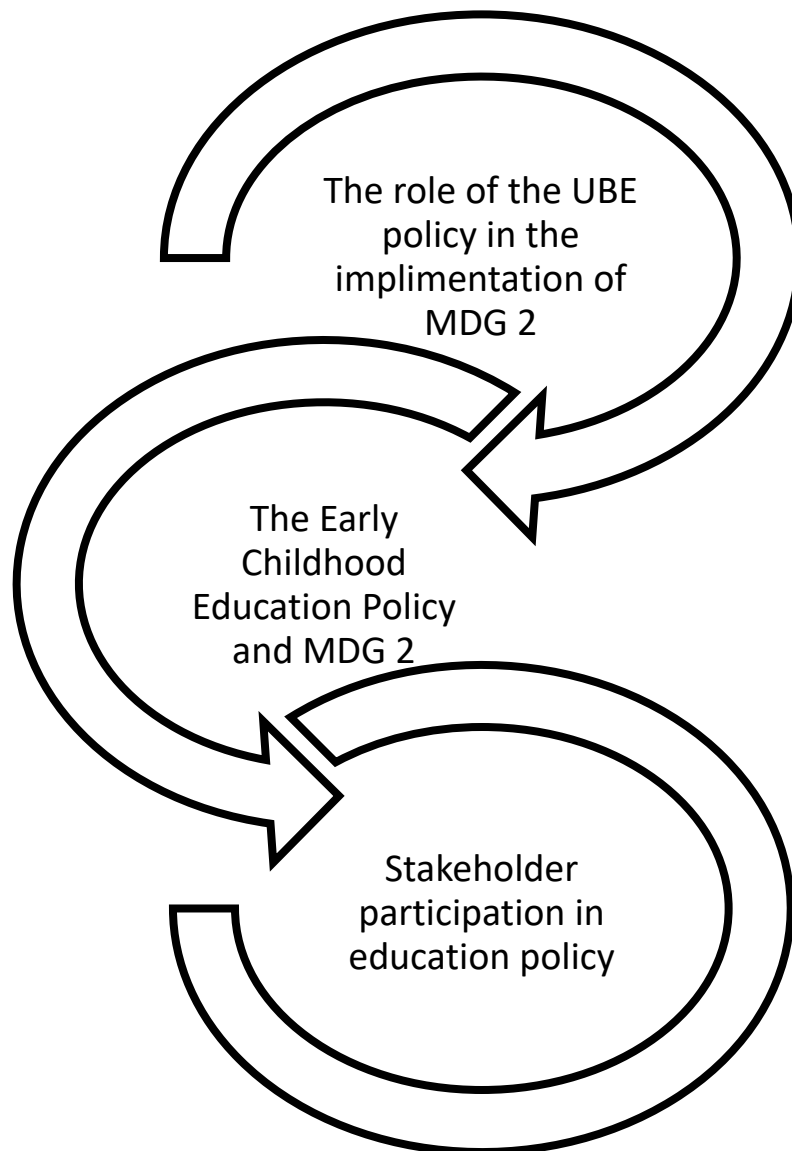


Figure 5 Disconnect between policy and practice and related sub-themes

The role of the universal basic education policy in the implementation of MDG 2.

As earlier mentioned in Chapter 2, the Nigerian government launched the UBE policy in 1999, and signed it into law in 2004. Many participants shared a general sentiment that the policy had some positive impact on primary school enrolment and therefore on MDG 2 as well. The enactment of the UBE legislation was a necessary first step toward public education. An administrator-participant commented thus:

The UBE policy is the tool the government used for the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. The policy significantly increased enrolment in my school. Before now, our number was very low. The UBE resulted in more enlightenment for parents, which in turn led to increased school enrolment. I think it is also because the policy made primary education free of charge and compulsory as well. Free textbooks and writing materials were provided and new classroom blocks were constructed. These attracted many parents to send their children and wards to schools. Before now, parents footed the bills for textbooks and writing materials, which some could not afford. (Administrator, Northwest zone).

The participant further noted that:

The “compulsory” aspect of the policy was a deviation from the past as it was the first time the government was making concerted efforts to ensure compulsory education for all children in this part of Nigeria since it attained political independence from Britain in 1960. The provision of instructional materials also encouraged enrolment as it took away the financial burden from parents. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

As a starting premise, the introduction of the UBE policy created awareness of the needs of children in Nigeria, and the introduction of the policy brought this to the fore. However, that it took Nigeria over four decades to recognize the need to make primary education compulsory raises questions as to the genuine commitment of successive military and civilian administrations in the country to education. The penalty for noncompliance with the policy according to research participants came as a new and impressive dimension that required parents to enrol their children in schools.

Administrators noted that while the legislation was beneficial, the lack of enforcement may have impeded its effectiveness. A number of factors suggested that there were significant disconnects between the ideals of the legislation and what occurred in practice. A participant noted: “We just have laws that no one ever cares to enforce. We have been talking about out of school children, but no parent has been punished in order for people to take the government’s threat seriously” (Administrator, Northcentral zone).

In this case, the administrator notes the frustration with the lack of accountability to parents who are not held to the legislative requirement. Another participant indicated that while the legislation was passed to create a free public education, the reality suggested otherwise:

Look, we need to tell ourselves the truth. If we say primary education is free, please let it be free. Absolutely nothing should be charged. That is not what we are seeing here. Some families are struggling to feed. Any additional expenses on their meagre income will

automatically kill their interest in educating their children. I have used my personal money to buy uniform for some children just to encourage them to come to school since their parents cannot afford it. The government should live up to its responsibilities by providing whatever is needed in school. In that way, no school can justify why they charge fees. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

The implication of this disconnect is that poor parents who may be willing to send their children to school are discouraged because of other expenses that may arise from schooling. Although certain fees are not often classified as tuition, extra charges for items such as books and learning materials, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) levies, and several others are not affordable by many parents, as explained by an administrator:

What is written in the UBE policy is sometimes different from what we see on the ground. When the government fails to renovate classroom blocks or provide basic things like chalk for writing, we charge levies to help. In my opinion, the government should provide everything required in schools so that no child is ever required to pay a penny for anything. For instance, some schools charge PTA levy for the reasons I just gave, while others charge sport fee, which goes to the Local Education Authority to provide sport equipment in schools but as I am talking to you right now, we have remitted the money to the authority and are yet to see any sport equipment. There is too much lack of accountability and corruption in many states. They will not provide the sporting equipment and will not refund the levy remitted to them. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This again raises the spectre of poverty and its implications for enrolment of children in schools. It also speaks to disconnect between the UBE policy and the practice in schools despite the provision of penalty for anyone charging fees. Thus, the inability of the country to firmly implement free education in primary schools leaves poor families with the option of not sending their children to school since they consider education as expensive.

Administrators commended the positive role of teacher training, and provision of instructional material and infrastructural facilities. While all these speak to efforts at the local level towards attainment of universal primary education for all Nigerian children, they also come with challenges that administrators believe need to be urgently addressed. For instance, the administrators identified the absence of a mechanism for retention of beneficiaries of teacher training initiatives in their schools as well as inadequate supply of instructional materials and infrastructural facilities as major challenges.

The importance of the role of the UBE in the training of teachers cannot be overemphasized given the challenges associated with low quality of teachers in Nigerian schools, an important point later explored in this work. Most participants indicated that their first knowledge of the MDG 2 came through workshops and seminars for teachers. They spoke highly of the exercise as it helped to improve their knowledge while exposing them to current teaching methodologies. One of the administrators said:

The training helped to empower teachers and make us better at teaching and imparting knowledge. We learned many things at the seminars especially pupil-centred approach to teaching. When I say pupil-centred, I mean the shift towards formative assessment. Teaching has been dominated by summative assessment for so long and it is not in the best interest of pupils. The use of iPads was also helpful as we were taught ways of connecting to the internet to access helpful resources during the seminar. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The UBE also provided in-service training for teachers as a way of contributing to their professional development. Another administrator commended the in-service training of teachers as follows: “The in-service training of teachers is a welcome development as it has enabled many teachers to obtain degrees and other qualification. The in-service training is really good as teachers are receiving their salaries while studying” (Administrator, Southeast zone).

Participants contend that the paradigm shift in the last decade in approaches to assessment from end-of-course (that is summative) testing to in-course (i.e. formative), improvement-focused interactions between learners and instructors is in the best interest of the child. The participants’ perception of formative assessment is a shift that will ensure that students are actively involved in their learning improvement process. The UBE-inspired seminars and workshops apparently have tapped into this new paradigm, which is a good development for primary education in Nigeria.

Despite the positive feedback associated with the training, participants equally expressed concerns that the selection criteria were not fair as not everyone gets to attend the training, while some of the attendees only do so because of the allowance they will be paid and not necessarily to enhance their knowledge. A participant expressed his concern as follows:

They gave us iPads, which is good, but someone like me with two wives and nine children surviving on a meagre salary, how do they expect me to buy data⁴ to connect to the internet. There should have been provision for data so that we can use it in the class. Why are they expecting me to use my personal money to buy data? The selection process should be improved for all teachers and administrators to attend the workshops. This is because some

⁴ Data: subscription for internet services from local services providers

of my colleagues are yet to attend. There should also be a mechanism to check those who only attend because of the monetary allowance and not because they want to improve their knowledge. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

While participants are clear that the professional development was needed and appreciated, there is a lack of attentiveness to how the support provided to the local authorities is targeted, and appropriate to the context of the schools and their communities. The seminars could gain from better organization.

An administrator expressed concern with the attitude of some teachers to in-service training:

The in-service training of teachers is good, but I am sorry to say that some teachers are not grateful. Their salaries are paid while on in-service training with the expectation that they will return to the classroom to use the knowledge acquired to teach children. Unfortunately, some of them never return at the end of their programmes; instead, they take up new jobs. The annoying thing is that no one is saying anything. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This sentiment was shared by many participants who expressed frustration at the practice. An administrator attributed it to failure on the part of the government:

I am sure it is because of lack of coordination among the various education agencies in this country. I say this because some of these teachers are able to take up employment in some of these agencies and no one is questioning them. As far as I am concerned, they are cheating the system. It is not right. It is just not fair. Some of these teachers had no interest in teaching. They just take advantage of the in-service training to acquire education before disappearing to other sectors to seek employment. The government is not taking any action to address this problem and that is unfortunate. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This statement speaks to a bigger issue that contributes to shortage of teachers in primary school since some of those trained for the classroom do not necessarily return.

The provision of instructional material and construction of facilities towards creation of a conducive environment for learning ranked among the ways local policy initiatives supported Nigeria's implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. Many school administrators shared the sentiment that the UBE supported many schools by providing blocks of classrooms, chalks, teaching aid such as charts and textbooks. Most research participants also acknowledged that it led to the construction of toilets in their schools. Ordinarily, basic amenities like school toilets should not be an important issue in a study on school enrolment. These are facilities that should be taken for granted as being readily available and accessible. However, the fact that research

participants from the six geopolitical zones singled out the provision of school toilets as an important facilitator of enrolment in their schools implies that there is more to it. The option in the absence of toilet is open defecation, which exposes members of the school community to serious health risks as expressed by an administrator:

I thank the MDG for building school toilets. It is a big relief as the available one is in a bad shape. I tell you, many schools have no toilet or no functional toilet or sometimes one or two toilets, which are grossly inadequate for the number of pupils. This has forced many to answer the call of nature in the bush, which is dangerous. I strongly recommend that toilet facilities should be made available in all schools. We are not there yet. Toilets will enable both teachers and pupils to concentrate on learning. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

The findings indicate that provision of toilet facilities will improve the learning and teaching experience of members of the school community and minimize exposure to excreta-related diseases. It will also ensure productive use of hours that could have been spent in the bush when the need to use the toilet arises. The inadequacies of school toilets represent a disconnect in practice from the UBE policy's intention to provide conducive learning environment in schools.

Research participants maintained that although the provision of facilities helped them to accommodate the increased number of students, they were grossly inadequate and not fairly distributed. Inadequate classroom blocks for instance result in overcrowded classrooms, which posed a threat to effective teaching and learning. An administrator spoke to this: "Some schools have libraries without books, while others have librarians without libraries. We have limited number of functional libraries. This is despite the fact that library plays an important role in fostering literacy skills in children" (Administrator, Northcentral zone).

Administrators also noted the lack of adequate and reliable data on primary education and the implications for planning and implementation of initiatives, as expressed by an administrator:

Let us not deceive ourselves, truth is that we do not have adequate data on education in this country. I mean primary education especially. There are also issues with the reliability of available data. I doubt if there are up to five state governors that can tell you the exact number of out of school children in their states. All we know is that there are many out of school children, but do we have data on all of them? I agree with the current figure at over 10 million, but I am telling you that the number of out of school children in this country is more than that. That looks like a conservative figure to me. No one really cares here. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

Speaking further to the challenge of reliability of data, some participants attempted to draw comparisons between Nigeria and the developed world:

Let us not even go far, take the case of some of our schools. Enrolment has increased thereby making it hard for teachers to follow-up if a child is absent from school. It is one thing for a teacher to mark the attendance register, and it is another thing to take action on absentees. In fact, I learned that in some countries, the law enforcement agencies or relevant bodies are notified to investigate why a child is repeatedly absent from school. No one really cares here. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This concern speaks to a bigger issue as the absence or inadequacy of data affects many things especially planning for effective delivery of universal primary education.

The research findings suggest that the universal basic education policy is a positive step in the right direction, but many gaps remain. While the aims of the policy attempted to increase the number of children attending schools, the numerous realities of school administrators suggested that it was an unfulfilled promise. The nature of the barriers to achieving this goal range from lack of enforcement of attendance, inconsistency of fees being tracked on, lack of materials, to inadequate training and the absence of a mechanism for retention of beneficiaries of in-service training initiative for teachers, as well as lack of adequate and reliable data on primary education.

Early Childhood Education Policy and MDG 2. The Early Childhood Education Policy equally featured in this study as an important local initiative that contributed to the goal of universal basic education for all children. The policy enabled operators to provide education to children under age five prior to commencement of kindergarten. Many administrators applauded the policy focus on confidence building opportunities that enables most children to be ready by the time they get to primary school, while also building a solid educational foundation for children. Participants equally identified challenges with implementation. This sentiment is illustrative of the disconnect between policy and practice in relation to the implementation of the early childhood education and inadequate policy coordination across government which creates the conditions for increased lack of accountability. This is reflective when an administrator commented that:

I like the whole idea of this early childhood education for children. That is what is happening in developed countries, and I fully support it. My concern however is that the government appears to be more interested in private operators running the show. That is why they are charging so much, and some parents cannot enrol their children. The government failed to make provision for nursery or kindergarten in many public schools thereby making private operators to charge as they so wish. The government can build a new school for pre-school

age grade or construct a new classroom in already existing schools. It would have been good for the government to seek advice from those of us in the public-school system to gather ideas on ways of implementing the policy. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

The findings suggest that although the policy as conceived is in the best interest of the child, there is a disconnect in implementation since public school administrators reasoned that a policy that prepares children for universal basic education needs to be implemented largely by them rather than private operators.

Early childhood education as delivered in Nigeria also elicited a criticism from another school administrator:

Early childhood is a fantastic initiative, but I have my reservations as it might do more harm than good if we are not careful. The government does not appear to be regulating it well. The other day I went to a privately-operated kindergarten where the teacher do not appear to have a good knowledge of the curriculum for children of that age. I do know that the method should be through play but that is what you get when there is no proper regulation and people who do not necessarily specialize in it are hired to teach. Another problem I see is that the language of instruction is English which is not right. The campaign promoting the use of the mother tongue or language of the immediate community is not happening. Everywhere you go, children are being taught in English. How can we promote or claim to be promoting our culture when our children cannot speak our language? The policy has failed woefully in that regard. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This finding is at variance with provisions of the Early childhood education policy as outlined in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) which spoke to the language of instruction and provision of early childhood education in all public schools in Nigeria.

Stakeholder participation in education policy. One of the overarching challenges against making substantive improvements to universal basic education is ensuring that the official policy is designed and implemented, necessarily, in consultation with the administrators who are entrusted to enact such policies. While a number of initiatives have been implemented from the federal government, in many cases the inconsistency or disconnect for how that manifests in the schools themselves is at odds. Specifically, administrators had a sense that they were an afterthought to the discussion, only brought in at the last minute or sporadically. The translation of policy to action in the schools is thus felt as a living tension in how to make sustained and continued progress toward universal basic education. .

The sentiment of feeling left out was felt across the six zones. School administrators stated that as a national group of stakeholders, they did not participate in the formulation of the policy regarding universal basic education. One participant argued:

Nobody told us anything. Those of us at the grassroots have better understanding of what is required for a program to succeed. We know the educational needs of our pupils, schools, and communities, but no one cared to involve us in anything. We only attended MDG training for teachers organized by the UBE people. Is that participation in education policy making? I do not really think so. No one asked to know what we really need. We are treated as employees and we just accept whatever they give us. We know these children more than all those people sitting in the headquarters, yet they will not invite us to participate in education policy decision-making matters on education. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The findings suggest that school administrators have minimal to no input in education policymaking decisions. In this way, there is a lessening of value of how the administrators may elevate and better support the implementation of policies. Conversely, when administrators are left out of the discussion, there is a devaluing of their role and authority.

One school administrator was more expressive in her statement:

There is no communication on education policy matters. At least those of us in school leadership should be carried along, but no one cares to do that. The practice these days is that examination questions for pupils in my school are set from somewhere at the discretion of the UBE headquarters, and imposed on my teachers to mark. Many times our pupils struggle with the content of the examination, as the questions are not areas we had taught them. There is so much disconnection. No one seems to think about the pupils as the ultimate victim. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

Another participant from the Southeast expressed her frustration as follows:

Changes to the curriculum without due consultation with relevant stakeholders will come back to haunt all of us one day. Imagine how they removed a subject called Family Life from the curriculum without explaining why. Family Life as a subject is so important as it enables us to teach children about changes they will experience as they grow into puberty and the precautions they need to take. Someone sat there and removed it without telling anyone. These days my teachers are compelled to teach whatever the curriculum requires them to teach even when they do not agree with it. That is the situation. We have no option but to succumb to these changes because evaluation by supervisors from the headquarters are based on it. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

There is a lack of stakeholder engagement as it relates to universal basic education. Most participants advocated a need for bottom-up approach to education policy making decisions, rather than the top-down approach, which was blamed for some of the challenges. A participant further explained: “There is a need to revisit the criteria for the appointment of education policy makers. It appears as if those that are mandated to design our policy lack some understanding of what is happening at the grassroots” (Administrator, Northcentral zone).

The findings indicate that universal basic education is falling short of expectation in relation to leading a coordinated approach to ensuring that all children are enrolled in school as stated in its policy document. A participant highlighted this in one of the interviews:

There are too many agencies involved in this whole thing about closing the enrollment gap. I thought it is the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) that is supposed to lead the task of meeting the MDG 2 on behalf of the government. However, what you see is that there is the Universal Basic Education Commission in Abuja (Nigeria’s federal capital territory), there is the Local Education Authority, there is the State Universal Basic Education Board. Some teachers take undue advantage of the lack of coordination among these agencies. For example, some teachers run away to other governmental organizations after receiving in-service training. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

Another administrator reasoned that: “With different groups coming for supervision, you do not even know who is who. In the end, no one acts on anything you tell them during supervision. There is so much confusion” (Administrator, Southwest zone).

These observations highlight the lack of coordination among government agencies towards addressing basic education as noted by a participant:

Nigeria has three federal agencies all with a claim on universal basic education program. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the National Commission For Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), all of whom believe that they have mandates that includes the provision of basic education in Nigeria. The situation is not different at the state government level where the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) is responsible for primary education, and the Secondary Education Board deals with junior secondary school (junior high). The chair of SUBEB is appointed by the state government and is of equal status with the state’s Commissioner of Education who is the constitutional head of the education sector in a state. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

This sentiment was equally shared by another participant who attributed the lack of coordination as a major challenge to universal primary education:

Even more complicated is the fact that the chair of SUBEB reports directly to the governor of the state thereby removing any opportunity for the two heads of the education sector to work on a coordinated approach to the provision of universal basic education. At the local government level, schools receive supervisory visits from SUBEB and the Local Government Education Authority. This lack of coordination makes the efficient supervision of teachers difficult, thereby allowing unprofessional or unqualified teachers to remain in the classroom at the expense of children. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The lack of coordination is not only felt among agencies who may be working at cross purposes, but is also exacerbated by the disconnect between the urban and rural education zones. For instance, the negligence of schools in rural areas featured in this research as an area where the UBE appears to be failing. A participant argued that: “The attention of the UBE seems to be more on urban public than rural schools. I do not believe that the United Nations will be happy to hear that. Enrolment in rural schools are low despite the MDG” (Administrator, Southsouth zone).

The participant’s position aligned with another administrator: “The government needs to make rural schools attractive to all. Some teachers often re-work their posting from rural to urban schools. Part of the reason is the distance they have to travel daily to work on rural bad roads” (Administrator, Northwest zone).

Another participant echoed this sentiment:

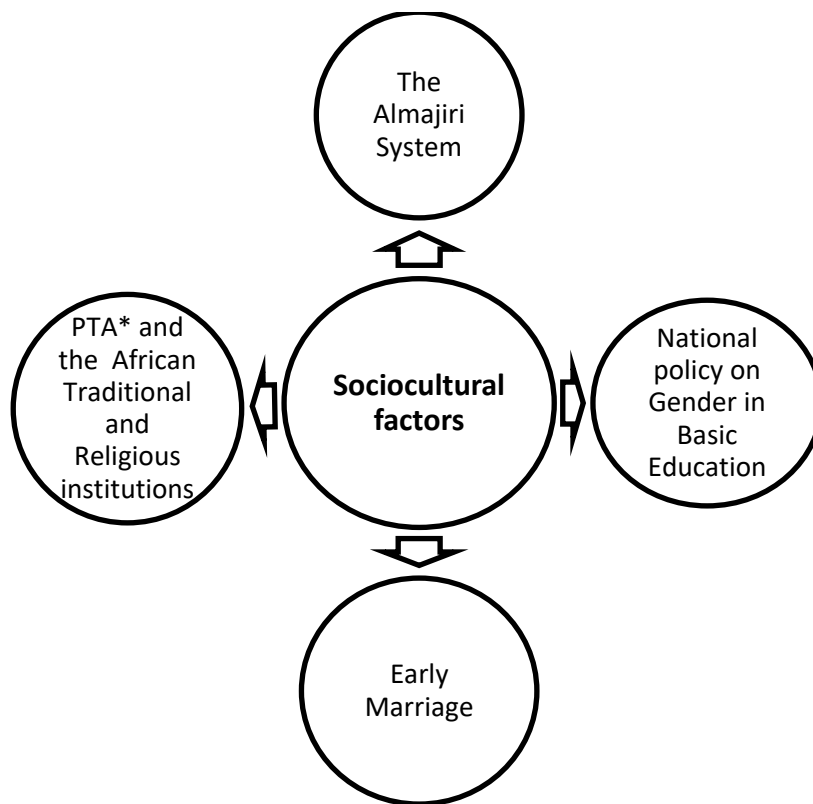
Why are they making it to look like the children attending rural schools are not human beings? These schools require similar attention as the ones in urban areas. Inspectors rarely visit schools in rural areas. And when they visit, they compromise the standards by accepting gifts from some teachers as well as administrators and failing to frown at unprofessional practices. For instance, during weekly or bi-weekly manual labour exercises when students are required to clear grasses in the school premises as part of good sanitation, some teachers take them to work on their private farms. Some teachers also take undue advantage of inadequate supervision to record high absences. Some qualified teachers equally preferred to teach in urban schools where they can enjoy access to social amenities. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

Rural school administrators feel that their schools and their children are not often considered in larger policy discussions. The high turnover of teachers from rural to urban areas are notable, and the poor

quality of supervisory and lack of accountability reinforces the vicious cycle of attending to the educational needs in these communities.

Sociocultural factors

The study found sociocultural factors both supported and constrained the implementation of the millennium development goal on universal education as shown in Figure 6. These factors are related to beliefs, behaviours, and objects as well as characteristics associated with members of particular groups or the society in which they live. They include: parent teacher associations and the African traditional, and religious institutions; early marriage; national policy on gender in basic education; and the Almajiri system.



*Parent-teacher associations

Figure 6 Sociocultural drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), and the traditional and religious African institutions. Parent Teacher Associations, and the traditional and religious African institutions in the community, play critical roles in supporting education when official policy may be inconsistently implemented. When such gaps appear, these bodies create awareness on the many advantages of enrolment, offer both moral support to the staff and at times when possible, financial support to

address a particular gap. Many participants acknowledged the important role played by the three groups in the implementation of the MDG 2. An administrator summarised this quite well:

Parents-Teacher Associations (PTA) in schools create awareness among parents on the many advantages of educating their children. These parents lead by example by enrolling their children as a way of showing that they have faith in education. Members of the PTA work with teachers in supporting the learning experience of children. They show interest in the school and feel they have a responsibility to support teachers by doing their part to encourage their children to learn. Religious leaders create awareness in places of worship, and many parents respond by bringing their children to school. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

The recognition by the PTA that parents are important stakeholders in the education of their children supported the implementation of the MDG. The action of the PTA and religious institutions are ways the society can support the implementation of government policy initiatives. By showing interest in schools, their activities also serve as a source of motivation for teachers as indicated by a research participant:

Many times, salaries are delayed for several months for no justifiable reason. Government is not interested in the welfare of teachers. However, we are encouraged by the words of appreciation that often comes from the PTA. They value our work in educating their children. When members of the PTA see my teachers at public functions, they are quick to whisper words of gratitude. Religious leaders also express gratitude to teachers from the pulpit while at the same time creating awareness among their congregation on the need to send children to school. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The findings indicate that the PTA and religious institutions consider themselves as important stakeholders in the education of children by providing moral support to teachers and creating awareness campaigns. In this way, they attempt to close the gap created by government's failure to motivate teachers while supporting enrolment awareness campaigns. Many administrators agreed on this as reflected by another research participant:

The PTA support sanitation activities around schools as they often turn up on some Saturdays to clear grasses around the school premises. Whenever we are in short supply of instructional materials like chalk, we use funds generated from the PTA levy so that teaching can go on. That is actually the duty of the government, but they just do it since government's provisions are rarely enough. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

The foregoing suggests that the PTA values education by often going the extra-mile to keep teachers motivated. Education awareness campaigns organized by the PTA towards driving up school

enrolment are good initiatives. However, levies and the provision of instructional materials are not necessarily the responsibility of the PTA. The claim of free universal primary education in Nigeria suggest that the funding of schools and associated activities are the responsibilities of the government.

African traditional institutions headed by traditional rulers or community leaders such as chiefs, elders, emirs etc emerged from the research as another important stakeholder that supported the implementation of the MDG. Despite having no constitutional role as highlighted in chapter 2, they are held in high esteem in their communities as the custodian of the people's custom and tradition, and known for promoting peace and forstering communal living, conflict prevention and resolution etc. They support constitutionally recognized authorities in maintaining peace, mobilization for program implementation and so on:

Our traditional rulers are great. They want all children in school and consistently challenged parents to bring their children to school. They know the various clans that makes up the community and makes it a duty to challenge them. Whenever teachers and students organize door-to-door or street-to-street drumming, singing, and dancing events to sensitize residents on the need to enrol children, the traditional rulers or their subjects show up as a way of endorsing the events and lending their voices to enrolment campaign. They are respected because they stand as the link between the living and our ancestors now resting in the heavens. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

The traditional institution wields great influence because of its prime position in the community. The institution and its head are often revered as many see them as the link between the living and the ancestors.

Another participant spoke to the activities of the institution:

Whenever schools organize inter-house competitions or prize and speech giving day events, the traditional institutions make it a duty to attend and they normally encourage parents at such events to enrol their children. These events often encourage parents to bring their children to school. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The presence of members of the traditional institution at school competitions and award ceremonies is a demonstration of the value they attach to education. A school administrator also praised the institution saying:

The traditional ruler in this place often take education sensitization campaign to wedding and naming ceremonies to encourage parents of the value of education. You know people are

always very relaxed at these ceremonies making merriment. The ruler use weddings as the right avenue since it is usually a gathering of many parents celebrating brides and grooms. They also focused on naming ceremonies where they charged parents of the new child and others present to enrol the baby in school as soon as he or she gets to the age. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

The influence of the African traditional institutions cannot be overemphasized. This is because they are recognized in African societies as the representatives of their communities and the custodians of their culture. Their interest in education is a positive development with the potential to address the challenge posed by the high number of out of school children in Nigeria.

Early Marriage. While Parent-Teacher Associations, religious, and African traditional institutions have become advocates for the support for universal basic education, broader African practices, such as early marriage, were identified as a key barrier to improving upon this goal. Early marriage was identified by many participants as one of the cultural issues associated with the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education:

Apart from the Boko Haram⁵ and bandits conflicts, we have cultural issues that have remained a challenge to school enrollment to this day. For instance, some parents would never bring their daughters to school. They need extra counselling or even force to make them change their minds. Some will never change their position because of their belief that their daughters could be negatively influenced to start following men (i.e. become promiscuous or engage in illicit sexual affairs). Since they prefer to marry them as virgins, some families prefer to keep their daughters at home rather than enrol them in school. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

In this case, there is an assumption that schooling of girls correlates with exposure to boys, and the potential for promiscuity. For families that must protect the virginity of the girl to make her more attractive for marital prospects, this perception often becomes a major detraction in sending girls to schools.

Another administrator echoed a similar concern:

We are beginning to see a change of attitude among some parents who now allow their daughters to attend school, but truth is that there are still many girls out there who will not be allowed to receive formal education. Some parents believe that the school environment will

⁵ Boko Haram's name literally means "western education is forbidden" and this terrorist armed group has been terrorizing Nigeria, especially in the Northeast and parts of the Northwest. The group launched an Islamic Jihad on Nigeria since 2009 and have killed several thousands, destroyed schools, and displaced children and their parents.

expose the girl child to corrupt practices especially involvement in sexual affairs.

(Administrator, Northwest zone)

Cultural issues emerged from this research as negatively affecting the enrolment of girls in school in northern Nigeria. The influence of tradition and culture, which often restrict certain rights of women leads to a situation whereby young girls are forced into early marriage for fear that they will become spoiled. One participant also spoke to the drivers of early marriage:

Early marriage is driven by poverty as some parents would get some good bride price from prospective in-laws. Since some of these parents are themselves uneducated, they do not realize that they would reap better returns if they marry off an educated daughter than one without education. The good intention of the MDG was affected by a long tradition of early marriage. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

The findings suggest that poverty and ignorance are important drivers of early marriage, implying that proposals towards ending the practice need to also consider ways of tackling these two serious issues. The research also found that the southwest geopolitical region is more enlightened about the girl-child education matter as issues of early marriage did not feature in conversations with participants. Cases of early marriage are also rare in the southeast and southsouth, leaving the northwest and northeast as well as parts of the northcentral as the areas most requiring interventions to address the practice.

An administrator spoke to a peculiar situation in the southeast: “There is no challenge to girl schooling here because some parents educate their daughters to make them more attractive to suitors so as to ask for higher bride price” (Administrator, Southeast zone).

Despite the economic motive for training the girl child in the southeast, participants reasoned that it is better than not training them at all. The study equally found another dimension to early marriage caused by activities of Boko Haram terrorist group largely operating in certain parts of northern Nigeria. This dimension is explained later in this chapter.

National Policy on Gender in Basic Education. The Nigerian government introduced the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education in 2006 to address gender disparity in school enrolment and facilitate access to education for all Nigerian children (Federal Ministry of Education, 2006). The government recognized that the disparity was that far more boys attend school than girls, particularly in northern Nigeria where girls are faced with barriers mostly driven by culture, poverty, and societal vices. The policy speaks to the fact that the Nigerian government recognized the crucial role of girls’ education as a channel to social justice and gender equality. It therefore set out to create

the enabling environment for initiatives aimed at promoting girls education such as recognition of the role of international development organizations in the noble task of women empowerment.

An interesting development from this research is that the United Nations Girls Education Initiative explored the enabling environment created by the policy in working with some state governments in northern Nigeria to address the rising number of out of school children, especially girls in their states and domains. One participant shared some light on this:

In Northwestern Nigeria for instance, everyone knows the challenge posed by low enrollment of girls in school. The government's initiative with support from foreign donors to establish a scholarship for any family that enrolls their daughter in school is a good one. That became a great motivation for parents as we have now started seeing a rise in the number of girls in school. I like the initiative, but I also think it is unfair as the scholarship should have been for both boys and girls. Do not forget that we have cases of boys not attending school as well. There are also families where all children are boys so they will never get to benefit from such scholarships. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

The establishment of a scholarship to drive school enrolment is a commendable and interesting dimension to universal basic education. While such initiatives are commendable, the research found another challenge to the implementation of MDG 2 explained in the following section.

The Almajiri system. The Almajiri system of education was a major challenge to the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal primary educations in the northern region. Almajiri as earlier stated is a Hausa word, meaning itinerant, traveler or migrant and refers to a person who travels from place to place in search of Islamic knowledge and wisdom through intensive learning and research under distinguished scholars as well as engage in community, humanitarian services (Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018). The system is only common in the northern part of Nigeria. (Agupusi, 2019; Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018).

An administrator echoed what was a common notion among other administrators:

The present day Almajiri system is a deviation from the good values in the system, which is one of learning and community service. What we have now are children under the age of 18 who have become street beggars that take proceeds to their Islamic master, and thereby inadvertently making themselves available as tools for terrorists. These children suffer severely from exclusions and deprivations. Their physical and social exposure appears to be unhealthy. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

A school administrator in the Northeast equally explained that:

Religion or what I call certain misinterpretations of Islam is a major hindrance to the implementation of the MDG. This is because some parents have a mindset that the Almajiri system is the best, probably because some of them were products of that system. They have a sense of loyalty to that system with total resistance to change. Some of these children end up as tools in the hands of religious extremists who takes undue advantage of their ignorance to perpetrate havoc on the Nigerian state. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

Another administrator indicated what looks like failure on the part of the government in relation to the Almajiri:

The Almajiri system encourages parents to send their school age children away to “renown” Islamic scholars in other parts of the country for Islamic education. In the process, the children roam the streets and beg for alms to sustain themselves since no formal fees are paid and both children and Islamic teachers do not have other means of livelihood. The Almajiri children are great opportunities the government is leaving to waste away. These children are great assets the government can develop to help us build a greater nation. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The elite in the northern zone appear not to be helpful as pointed out by an administrator:

The elite in the north are part of the problem because they deliberately refuse to act towards ending the Almajiri system. The elite had been in power in this country for many years but never took steps to end this system and all the ills that come with it. If the system is good, why did they not enrol their children in it? Their children speak the same language and practice the same religion as the Almajiri children, but they choose not to promote education for all. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The findings indicate that the Almajiri issue is a complex one with the elite and non-elite as part of the problem. A sentiment shared by many participants is that the system, as currently practiced in Nigeria, is a challenge to the attainment of universal primary education, and a need to re-examine the system in its entirety.

Another socio-cultural factor posing as a challenge to enrolment in these zones is nomadic education associated with the Fulani pastoralists. An administrator stated that:

This country needs to take the education of the children of Fulani herdsmen seriously. I know there was an agency established regarding this but everywhere you see herdsmen in this country, you see their children rearing cattle during school hours. They will end up becoming

a problem to this country if urgent action as are not taken to educate them now.

(Administrator, Northwest zone)

The Fulani herdsmen survive by rearing cattle. They have no stable base as they only move to where they can get pasture for their herds of cattle. This movement therefore makes it difficult to send children to school as their services are required to rear cattle. Following scholarly research on the plight of this group, the government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) aimed at helping them to access western education. However, some administrators suggest that the commission has more work to do since the north where the Fulani are mostly found remains the most educationally backward region in Nigeria.

Socioeconomic Drivers and Constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2

The interaction of a number of social and economic factors (see Figure 7) equally influenced the implementation of the millennium development goal on universal education. These factors are explained thematically in this section along the lines of school feeding program and implementation of the MDG 2, poverty as a constraint to the implementation of MDG 2, insecurity, and poor welfare of teachers.

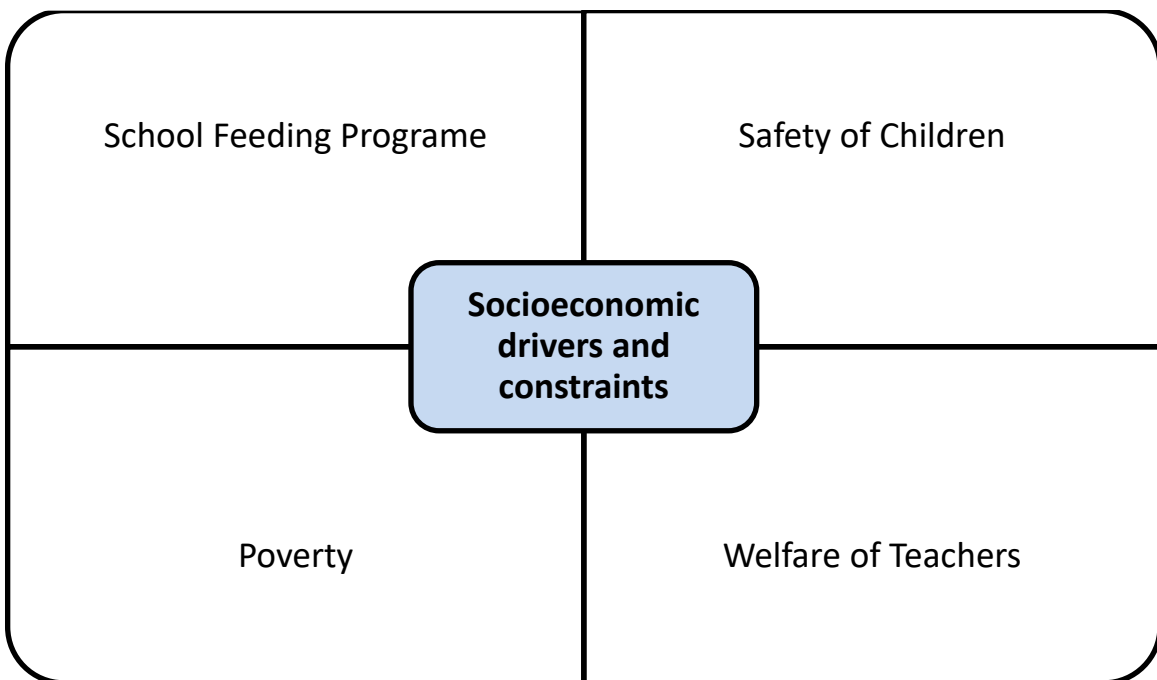


Figure 7 Socioeconomic factors

School Feeding Program and implementation of the MDG 2. The National Home Grown School Feeding Program is a local policy initiative first introduced by the Nigerian government in 2004 as part of strategies to address poverty, improve health and education of children towards

achievement of the MDG 2 on universal basic education. Many participants acknowledged that the program encouraged parents to enrol their children in schools, as expressed by one school administrator:

Some parents who ordinarily were not interested in educating their children had a change of heart on realizing the children, in addition to learning, will also receive free meals in school every day. The school feeding program is an excellent poverty reduction strategy and something that is having an immediate impact that everyone is able to see. The school feeding program made our job easy as news made the round quickly and parents decided on their own to bring their children to school. School enrolment has increased because of the school feeding program. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

In recent years (starting from 2017), the government has become more proactive in making this a reality and many states in the country have benefitted from the program. It thus addresses the issue of food security that is prevalent in Nigeria, while encouraging and promoting enrolment in the schools where these programs are implemented.

Although some administrators saw the positive correlation of providing food and increased enrolment, another administrator noted some of the shortcomings in implementation:

We were serving breakfast to children before, but we have to change it to lunch. This is because we noticed that some children disappear from school immediately after breakfast to go and help their parents on the farm or street hawking⁶. To such children and their parents, the program simply guarantees food without any need to attend school. We changed from breakfast to providing lunch such that children must attend classes before eating. This strategy ensured that they remained in school. Before I forget, let me mention that some schools have no access to the program. Government should urgently extend it to all schools across Nigeria to make enrolment more attractive. This is because the program will help to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger among children and their parents. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

That some parents would encourage children to eat and disappear to the farm rather than encourage schooling speaks to the complexity associated with hunger and poverty one hand, and the high number of Nigeria's out of school children on the other.

The negative attitude of some parents towards schooling is not enough to discredit the positive impact of the school feeding program as an important driver of the implementation of the MDG. By focusing

⁶ The art of children selling edible and non edible products on the streets. Some children engage in these sales during school hours. Child street hawking is among the main forms of child labour.

on increasing children's access, participation and achievement in school, the initiative if sustained has the potential to make important contribution towards closing the enrolment gap.

Poverty as a constraint to the implementation of MDG 2. Poverty featured prominently in this research as a major constraint to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal on universal basic education. An administrator reasoned that: "There is so much poverty in the land. Parents are reluctant to send their children to school because they are poor and unable to afford the basics such as school uniforms and books" (Administrator, Northeast zone).

Participants across the six geopolitical zones were unanimous in their arguments that poverty is the one thing most Nigerians have in common, and one that they see daily in the classroom.

The findings indicate that both teachers and parents have different levels of poverty. While the former is driven by passion for their job to continue teaching despite their meagre salaries, the latter often resort to employing the services of their children to support the family in child labour (street hawking, farm activities, among others) or any activity that could improve the family's economic status. A school administrator disclosed that:

Many parents prefer having their children hawk to raise money for the family rather than attend school. Convincing them otherwise is usually tough since they have seen many unemployed graduates. Many times, these children have become victims of the negative consequences of child labour such as sexual molestation, crime and violence, all in the quest for family survival. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

Child street hawking is a common sight in most Nigerian cities. The study found that many children engaged in the act at the request of their parents, and that in itself raises questions as to conditions that would make parents to permit their children to engage in an activity they know is risky. This sentiment was shared by many participants as reflected in an administrator:

The painful thing is that some children are seen during school hours hawking or doing all manner of work, but no one cares to ask questions. In fact, some of these children sell groundnuts, and all kinds of fruits during office hour in government offices and some of the government officials who should know better prefer not to ask questions and patronize them. Shame on such officials. Shame on you for not speaking out when the mates of your children who should be in school with yours are hawking. The government has failed them. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

Another administrator echoed a similar sentiment:

Look, child labour is a big problem and some teachers are among the drivers. I said this because children are being molested sexually. They are forced to help some teachers with domestic work like fetching water or working on their farms. They lose the time they should have been in the class to learn. It is just not fair. Education inspectors or supervisors do not seem to frown at this there making these teachers to think they are doing the right thing. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

Some administrators suggested that parents alone are not to blame for child street hawking. They believe that the responsibilities rest on both parents and the government for failing to effectively address poverty. Their suggestion is based on the premise that the government and its employees needs to be seen to be condemning any activity that will put a child on the street during school hours when his/her agemates are in the classroom learning.

The situation in the Southeast is quite interesting as children are enrolled as apprentices to work under the supervision of a master tradesman rather than attend school. The apprentice or trainee is expected to live with and work for his master while learning the master's trade for a period ranging between three and seven years, at the end of which he graduates into his own trade. A school administrator explained further, "School age children in this place (Southeast) work under a master, graduate, and the master "settles" them to start their own business."

"Settling" means a master giving an initial capital to a faithful trainee at the end of his service to start up his own business. The administrator described a faithful trainee as: "One who in addition to demonstrating good knowledge and experience of the trade, excelled in customer service and did not steal his master's money or was found to have done any negative thing against his master's business" (Administrator, Southeast zone).

There were times when some masters deliberately find faults with trainee towards the end of their apprenticeship and dismiss them in order not to part with initial capital for the trainees. While the instances of these are few, the system works such that some lucky former trainees could become more successful than their masters. As an administrator put it:

Some of these former apprentices have built big businesses that hire unemployed graduates. This has been a great challenge to enrollment since the evidence is very clear for children and their parents, thereby influencing their perception to believe that one does not necessarily need primary education to become successful. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

The poverty is not an issue for children and families who may send their children to school, but also to the teachers who are committed to providing an education but living below the poverty line. One school administrator argued that:

It is only teachers with the fear of God that are willing to teach when the relevant authorities do not care about their welfare. There are still many teachers who are full time permanent employees on US\$28 monthly salary. How do you expect them to survive? (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The findings indicate that teachers will be highly motivated to work if the government prioritizes their welfare and commits to doing more. It also shows that some parents, in the face of poverty, are not necessarily interested in the non-economic benefits of education, as pointed out by an administrator:

To make up for their loss, uneducated businessmen in the southeast ensure that they marry educated women. These men often boast that the educated graduates without money are unable to marry the best girls, which they can have with their wealth. My generation married for love, but that is not what you find these days. Most parents and their daughters are not really interested in marrying poor men. A university degree can translate into financial wealth some day, but not many people are that patient anymore. The case is also complicated with the high cost of bride price in Igboland⁷. The other day, one state in the Southeast wanted to harmonize and standardize bride price to address the exorbitant price tag parents put on their daughters. These price tag discourage young men most of whom have to spend several years searching for job after graduation. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

The findings suggest that the situation in the southeast requires a more focused awareness campaign. There seems to be an established tradition that applauds financial wealth regardless of whether being educated or not. That the uneducated appears to be living more comfortable sends the wrong message to unemployed graduates and families who might prefer to enrol their children as an apprentice rather than send them to school. Since this has become an important and an acceptable norm in the zone, a societal effort would be required to change the orientation. An enabling environment to combat poverty needs to be created. Until this happens, a significant closure of the enrolment gap could be a challenge.

An opinion shared by one of the research participants spoke to the enormity of the poverty challenge: “It looks like the MDG on poverty eradication was not thoroughly pursued the way they pursued the one on universal basic education. I think that was a mistake because poverty is a threat to education” (Administrator, Northeast zone).

This participant highlights an often-overlooked connection between poverty and education, indicating that pursuing one in isolation can only provide a temporary solution to a problem that could resurface within a short time.

⁷ Ibo or Igbo is the predominant tribe in Nigeria’s southeast. The southeast is also referred to as Iboland or Igboland.

An administrator spoke to one of the interventions of the Nigerian government aimed at addressing poverty:

Over a year ago or so, the Nigerian government introduced the conditional cash transfer through which some of the poor receive like 5,000 naira (US\$13) monthly. Hopefully they can feed with that and send their children to school. I tell you, poverty is a serious threat to primary education in this country. It is one of the major root causes of the high number of out of school children. Some people said poverty is a curse and at times I tend to agree with them because poverty affects one's ability to do many things. But my question is: how do you expect an average family of six in Nigeria, that is a husband, wife, and four children to survive on 5,000 naira a month? Let's even say a family of four. We still have a long way to go in this country. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

This administrator acknowledged that poverty was one of the root causes of the high number of out of school children. There is a lived reality that until poverty can be addressed in the broader society, the children will often be used to help provide financial support to the family in order to survive.

The nature of poverty is an overarching theme in how any initiative to promote universal basic education may be compromised if the family relies on children to help provide financial support for them to survive. Any initiatives that may mitigate these extreme challenges such as addressing food security through school food programs may soften these poverty stricken communities. While it will not alleviate it entirely, it may help to encourage families to think differently about how schools may break this cycle.

Safety of children. For administrators, crime is not relegated to the broader streets, but is lived in the unsafe conditions and potential crimes that may target schools and children.

A school administrator reasoned that:

Kidnapping is threatening universal primary education. The degree of poverty in the land is alarming. I have never seen anything like this in my life. People are trying their hands on everything to survive including kidnapping. Teachers are being kidnapped. The youth are involved in kidnapping because of unemployment. Primary school dropouts are involved. When caught, they often blame it on poverty. Kidnapping has become so lucrative as families have to pay significant amounts to secure release of their loved ones. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

These administrators highlighted the relationship between poverty and crime. The implication of these findings is that the government and relevant stakeholders need to make conscious efforts to address the

causes of the kind insecurity described by the participants. If children are kept busy in schools, there will be minimal attraction to engaging in crime. This is not necessarily to say that students do not engage in armed robbery. Rather, the government needs to be seen to be providing opportunities and the basic necessities of life in order to minimize the attraction to crime. This is important as many robbery and kidnapping suspects often paraded in Nigeria are either illiterates or school dropouts. As a participant state: “The natural instinct for most parents in the face of insecurity is to safeguard their children. Some prefer to lock them in the house where they are certain that the risk of being kidnapped is low” (Administrator, Southsouth zone).

Given the real risk of children being harmed in schools, it is unsurprising that parents may view the value of enrolling their children in schools less than the physical value of protecting them within their sight.

At a time when Nigeria ranks as the poorest country in the world, insecurity especially the type perpetrated by armed robbers and kidnappers is not in the best interest of the country. As a matter of fact, kidnapping is not only a threat to education, but many other sectors of the Nigerian economy. For an economy in search of strategies to get out of poverty, foreign investors are always a welcome development. In the face of insecurity, investors would prefer to invest in countries where their security is guaranteed. There is therefore no doubt that the implication of insecurity for Nigeria is enormous.

Poor welfare of teachers. The research found that teachers’ welfare does not appear to be an important priority for the government. A school administrator stated that:

Teachers’ welfare is poor and that alone is demotivating. It is unfortunate that the same children we taught, become politicians and end up making life difficult for us. Public school teachers across the country are often being owed several months of salaries. Government do not see our welfare as an important priority. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

Another administrator elaborated on this direction of thought:

See, I am afraid of retirement because those who retired before me are yet to receive their pension. The essence of pension deduction during one’s active years is to have something to fall back on when you retire. I tell you, so many retired teachers and administrators have died struggling to receive their pensions without seeing it. Posterity will judge all those inflicting pain on those of us in the teaching profession. We have proceeded on strike a number of times, but the government do not really care. They negotiate for us to suspend strike, only to continue their old ways of owing salaries when we resume. Teachers are not motivated. Our salaries are among the lowest of government employees. Many teachers reluctantly come to school. Some

take the frustration to the classroom. There is currently a state governor that has not paid teachers for almost 9 months. Salaries are irregular and where they are paid, certain percentage is deducted without explanation. This is demotivating. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The research participants argued that they often do their best to keep their teachers motivated but also indicated that they equally need motivation themselves as they suffer the same fate as teachers when it comes to welfare. Even if Nigeria achieves 100% school enrolment, the findings of this study suggest that that there is no guarantee that the pupils will receive the best education if teachers' welfare remains poor.

Sociopolitical factors influencing attainment of universal primary education

The study found that sociopolitical factors had great influence on the attainment of universal basic education as shown in Figure 8. These factors are explained within the broad themes of: qualities of teachers and quality of education, abolition of government teachers training colleges, and; examination malpractice. Others include absence of political will and misplacement of priorities; as well as armed conflict and violence.



Figure 8 Sociopolitical factors

Quality of teachers and quality of education. There is an excessive emphasis on school enrollment and not much about the quality of teachers and the quality of education delivered as echoed by an administrator:

The MDG spoke to enrollment, which is great, but the government here do not appear to be serious about what children are learning. The investment in training of teachers is not enough. There is a need for regular professional development exercise. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The position of many research participants is that the quality of teaching needs to be seen as important as school enrolment. The study found that the ‘ghost worker’ syndrome also affects the quality of education in public schools. An administrator spoke to this:

We have a situation where no one is motivated. There are ghost workers on the pay roll who are never here to support any student because they are ghosts. The ghost workers remain on the payroll, while hardworking and dedicated employees are sacked or forcefully retired. Some of those behind the ghost workers syndrome have agents in who will put calls across to someone to show-up whenever there is a screening exercise to claim to be the ones on the payroll and demonstrate that they are working. They normally disappear after such screening exercises. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

A ghost worker is a fictitious employee on the payroll, but never seen in school. Participants explained that a ghost worker is actually a name that appears on the pay roll for which a public official or politician receives salaries and entitlements, whereas the employee is not employed or do not even exist. The resources that could have been spent on other teachers to improve either their welfare or provide facilities for schools are diverted to private pockets. When probed further to explain why a school administrator would not report practices, the administrator replied that the administrator is normally afraid for his or her job and life, while others are part of the conspiracy since they also benefit from this gross deception.

Participants also disclosed that the politicization of the recruitment of teachers without due consideration for the relevance of their qualification is a challenge in delivering quality education in schools, as noted by a research participant like many others:

Some of these teachers have no interest or passion for teaching. They bring them here because they have no job elsewhere. This is unfair to the children we are expected to teach and inspire. Politicians do not think about the implication of their actions. Some parents are so upset by the quality of teachers in some public schools that they now prefer private schools where they believe that politicians have minimal influence. (Administrator, Southsouth zone)

The argument by some of the participants highlighted the need to approach primary education with the interest of the child in mind. The current practice of recruitment where politicians get their candidates employed without due process and required qualifications has led to a situation whereby some parents prefer to enrol their children in private schools where they believe they might fare better.

Politics also played an important role in appointments to crucial educational positions. An administrator in the Northwest expressed dissatisfaction with the practice:

They play politics with everything. However qualified a candidate is for instance, he can never be appointed to head a primary school here if he/she is not an indigene of this state. Too much nepotism and tribalism here. In the process, some schools now have unqualified administrators as well as teachers. It is the same story at the ministries of education and educational agencies staffed by cronies of politicians, who make policy decisions for us even when they are not qualified. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The findings indicate that a major step towards improving the quality of education lies in the appointment of qualified personnel to educational position. The failure on the part of government to enforce merit-based criteria in such appointments could be among the root causes of poor quality of education.

Abolition of government teachers training colleges. Participants agreed that the abolition of the government teachers' college by the Nigerian government contributes to the problem of unqualified teachers. According to an administrator:

Government abolished teachers' colleges and caused all these problems of poor quality of teaching in primary schools because only those interested in teaching were admitted to such schools then, and upon graduation, they proceeded to institutions of higher learning where they continued their teachers' training. That is not the situation today as most of those that end up in Nigeria's Colleges of Education (COE) are those who were unable to secure admission to universities for other courses. Upon graduation from COE, they find their way into the classroom where they do not really add any value because the passion is not there. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

The findings suggest that the abolition of teachers training colleges is an important root cause of the quality of education in some Nigerian schools. This finding has several implications prominent among which is the quality of teachers. One research participant was nostalgic about the days of the government teachers training colleges and their products:

There was a time in this country when it was a noble thing to be a teacher in any community in Nigeria. At the time, teachers who were products of teachers training colleges were held in high esteem and greatly revered by pupils and their parents as well as the society. Those were the days when teachers were the product of teachers' training colleges, and they came into the profession with a burning desire to serve and produce future leaders. All that has changed because there are many unqualified teachers who never dreamt of becoming teachers but found themselves in the system to earn salaries only. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

The findings indicate that the teaching profession is gradually changing from what it used to be because of the infiltration of unqualified teachers into the classroom. While the idea of a degree in education is good, the findings found that it would have been helpful to leave the Teachers' colleges to continue training high school students for the faculty of Education in Nigerian universities as reasoned by one participant:

A major challenge to national development in this our country is the inconsistencies of government policies. There is too much pride as successive governments prefer to develop their own policies, and are often not receptive to continuity. The NCE program in Colleges of Education that replaced the Grade 2 teaching certificate awarded at teachers training colleges do not address the unique teaching needs of primary education. The curriculum is not focused on primary education, and the ultimate victims are the pupils. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The participant's observation highlighted an important issue since teachers whose training did not centre on primary education curriculum should not be expected to be the best in primary schools. It can therefore be argued that the potential consequences of the decision to abolish teachers training colleges was not well examined. Examination malpractice explained in the next sub-section is one of the consequences of poor quality of education and poor quality of teachers.

Examination Malpractice. Increased incidents of examination malpractice featured as an important challenge to the implementation of universal primary education as indicated by an administrator:

Unqualified teachers produce weak students who are not able to compete with their peers. Some parents prefer to take their children to private schools but the truth is that their teachers are not as qualified as teachers in the public school system. The availability of good teaching facilities in private schools makes them more attractive to some parents, but that does not mean their teachers are better. Agreed some are good, but majority do not have the relevant teaching

qualification. If government decides to provide such facilities in public schools, they will become attractive too. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

This sentiment was also shared by another administrator:

Some parents prefer private schools because of the acclaimed success rates in final school leaving exams. What is hidden from many is that some of the private schools have created “miracle centres” known for massive pass rates in exams through examination malpractices. The students eventually struggle when they get to secondary schools and universities since they cheated to pass. It pains me as a parent and administrator when a child completes primary education and still unable to compete with his/her peers. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

The findings indicate that the quality of teachers directly affects the quality of teaching they will deliver and the quality of students they will produce. While private schools are also able to enrol children, there is no guarantee that all the teachers are qualified. Although examination malpractice could result in excellent grades, it actually complicates the problem.

An administrator argued that: “Inasmuch as there are unqualified teachers, there are also highly qualified ones, and investment in regular training and development of teachers will improve their skills to excel at their work” (Administrator, Northwest zone).

This is important because teachers’ training helps to enhance students’ skills and academic achievements. The rapid changes of the 21st century requires that teachers should be trained regularly, with the expectation that they will impart same knowledge in their pupils. As explained in the following sub-section, the lack of political will is among the factors that constrained Nigeria’s implementation of the MDG 2.

Absence of Political Will and Misplacement of Priorities. The research found that the lack of political will and misplacement of priorities on the part of political leaders impede the attainment of universal primary education. According to a school administrator:

Most of the politicians in power these days do not have the political will to effect the desired change. They do not care. Their priorities are different. For many of them, primary education or education for that matter is not the issue right now. It is unfortunate. (Administrator, Southeast zone)

Political factors especially the inability of the government to create an enabling environment is a challenge to the attainment of the MDG 2. For instance, administrators highlighted the challenge of overcrowded classrooms echoed as follows:

Overcrowded classrooms militate against school enrolment because children prefer to be elsewhere than in schools especially knowing that they will not be missed. Teachers find it difficult to manage overcrowded classrooms because keeping track of who was in class or not at each point in time would not be easy because of pupil-teacher ratio in some cases which is between 1:60 and 1:80. Overcrowded classrooms in addition to exerting pressure on teachers also put pupils at a disadvantage, as they do not receive close supervision and mentorship. (Administrator, Southwest zone)

This raises broader questions given the emphasis of MDG 2 on enrolment without commensurate emphasis on quality. Perhaps if both quality and enrolment had been prioritized from the outset, a comprehensive strategy towards the removal of barriers to high quality education would have been established. It is not necessarily enough to blame the MDG, rather state governments and their governors cannot be exonerated from failing to prioritize quality education for indigenes of their states as observed by a school administrator:

Some elected politicians are misusing our resources. They do not even think about education because they have other priorities. How can a government use public funds to sponsor people's marriages? Our government spent millions on people's marriage ceremonies, when many children are out of school. By sponsoring marriages, the government is promoting a culture of dependence. (Administrator, Northwest zone)

Another administrator expressed concern at the use of public funds to fund private religious practices:

Also, how can a government use public funds to sponsor people on pilgrimage to Mecca and Jerusalem or feed people observing the teachings of their religion? Why not empower the people to help themselves? You feed them at Ramadan, then leave them to go hungry after Ramadan. We are the cause of our problem in this country. No need to blame the United Nations. I have been saying this and I will repeat: I do not believe that Nigeria needs international development aid. We have resources that are being mismanaged. If government at all levels (local, state, and federal), especially state governors stop wasting our financial resources on irrelevant things, we will be able to address most of our needs. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The perception is that while there may be available funds, it is less clear that politicians are using it in appropriate and targeted ways to support universal basic education. This raises bigger questions in relation to accountability on the part of government officials and the right of citizens to speak up against inappropriate practices. At a time when Nigeria tops the list of countries with out of school children, it would have been expected that state governments would prioritize education rather than politicize it.

Armed conflict and violence. Armed conflict and violence featured prominently in this study as important constraints to the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. These kinds of violent conflicts are categorized into three, namely: cultism, herdsmen-farmers' conflict, and, Boko Haram and the use of girls as weapons of war.

Cultism. The study identified cultism as a kind of conflict prevalent in Nigeria's Southsouth region. Cultism is highlighted as something beyond the general crime and poverty issues that arise from the findings. It speaks to the specificities of how children are used as collateral by cults. Cultists are Nigeria's equivalent of gang groups in North America and Europe, with the added flavour of being associated with African fetish practices. They are commonly portrayed in local movies as ritualists, whose objectives include the quest for riches and power. In real life, cultists are armed and often engage other rival cults in open armed conflicts, which usually result in a number of casualties. These conflicts scare people from normal activities and schoolchildren from attending and concentrating at school.

While this may be a different form of armed conflict, an administrator believes that it is an important barrier to the implementation of universal basic education:

Everyone in Nigeria believes the oil money is here (in the southsouth) since we account for over 90 percent of Nigeria's income.... we have problems too. Have you not read about what cultism is doing here? There are several cults here such that some parents do not send their children to school for fear of being kidnapped. There are teachers who have consistently missed school for fear of being kidnapped or killed. The safer schools are in the big cities where security is guaranteed to some extent, but no one really cares about the situation in rural areas where cult members have so much power. Unfortunately, it looks like these cultists are untouchable as some of them have godfathers among politicians. We would have done better in terms of primary education without these cultists. (Administrator, Southsouth zone)

Cultism as another form of violence is a challenge to the implementation of the MDG 2 as indicated by the administrator. By kidnapping and killing either parents or their children, cultists instill fear in Nigerian residents. The findings suggest that insecurity remains a major constraint to the attainment of the MDG.

Herdsmen-farmers' conflict. Some participants disclosed that displacement by armed conflicts especially the kind resulting from herdsmen-farmers' conflict is an important barrier to the implementation of the MDG with the potential to affect the SDG in the same way. One of the school administrators noted that:

Some people are thinking that these herdsmen versus farmers' conflict is only about the two main actors involved. That is a big mistake. Across Northcentral Nigeria, many communities have been displaced as a result of the conflict, which has so far claimed hundreds of lives. School children have been killed in the conflict. Parents and bread winners have died. So many women and children have been killed. Many have been displaced such that their focus is on survival rather than sending their children to school. These days, people do things in a hurry for fear of another attack surfacing. Many Nigerian communities are under siege. Schools are closed because of their attacks. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The North-central zone of Nigeria has been bedeviled by herdsmen attacks on villages for nearly a decade with devastating consequences. The conflict scenario does not appear to be abating as echoed by an administrator:

We are just toying with fire in this country. This herdsmen crisis will make us lose out on many things. The government appears to be confused. I was shocked the other day when I heard the Nigerian President saying "we will continue to pray for God to help resolve the conflict". In all my life I have never heard that. How can a government resort to prayers instead of looking for a solution? Even when parents send their children to school, teachers as well as the children are afraid for their lives. It is not a matter of empty fear. We have seen people killed and buried here. I do not mean on television. My neighbours were killed the other day. The UN needs to take conflict in developing countries serious if they ever intend to meet the SDG Goal on education. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The security situation has continued to make Nigerian citizens lost trust in the leadership of the country. The findings indicate that there is a high level of fear in the land. The fear itself is a threat to primary education since three of the important stakeholders i.e. pupils, teachers, and parents are looking for a safe haven. Still commenting on the herdsmen-farmers' conflict, one school administrator disclosed that:

Our primary schools are beginning to feel the impact of this herdsmen-farmers conflict . As I tell you, some communities displaced by the AK 47 wielding herdsmen have moved into ours thereby driving up the number of children in schools. We do not have capacity for this population explosion, and there is no way our teachers can meet the demand given infrastructural challenges that we have been struggling with. Unless something is done urgently, these children will not receive the desired quality of education, which is one of the things the SDG plans to address. My sister, we have a problem in this country. The way these herdsmen are going, I am telling you that if not quickly addressed it could become worse than Boko Haram. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

The Fulani-herdsmen versus farmers conflict has led to hundreds of deaths and thousands of displacements. The study found that the inability of the Nigerian government to effectively contain this conflict is an indication that it is only a matter of time before the situation gets out of hand. School children are often one of the most vulnerable populations during conflicts. There also appears to be no credible national roadmap towards addressing these conflicts in certain parts of the country.

Boko Haram and the use of girls as weapons of war. An administrator spoke to the threat posed by the Boko Haram terrorists' militia group: "Attacks by Boko Haram fighters have made it difficult for us to retain teachers as everyone is running for their lives. We have never had it this bad."

(Administrator, Northeast zone)

One of the striking research findings is the direct implication of armed conflict in the northern region of Nigeria and the ways in which families are devising strategies to protect their children, particularly girls. A key strategy that is employed by families from lower socio-economic positions is to marry their children early as soon as they could. A participant in Nigeria's Northeastern geopolitical zone noted this ethical dilemma:

We have been creating awareness among parents to send their children to school but many now prefer to marry off their daughters. To be honest it is not their fault to do so. Boko Haram appears to be more powerful than the Nigerian government, which is evident in the number of schools they have burnt, and the number of lives taken since they declared war on this country in 2009. A parent had frankly asked me to choose between sending a child to school and living in perpetual fear of being kidnapped or killed, and marrying her off to someone possibly outside the Northeast. I couldn't say a word. That is the story here. The MDGs meant well at least when talking about school enrolment, but who will be comfortable sending their children to school in the face of insecurity? (Administrator, Northeast zone)

The rationale for this decision by some parents is the presumed peace of mind that comes with knowing that their female children are safe and alive in their marital homes, rather than the risk and uncertainty associated with sending them to school at a time when many had become weapons in the hands of militants.

In the absence of a guaranteed security for children, some administrators indicated that parents cannot be entirely blamed for resorting to unconventional ways of ensuring that their girls remain alive. To these parents, early marriage protects their daughters, who are at risk of unspeakable violence at schools. As another administrator said: The government keeps saying children should be sent to school. They keep saying early marriage should be discouraged. That is ok. The children of rich government officials are studying in protected environments abroad and in private schools in other

parts of the country. Provide security here if you want to encourage parents to send their children to school. Period! (Administrator, Northeast zone)

These results indicate that there appears to be some complexities in the fight against Boko Haram, suggesting that there could be a relationship between poverty and susceptibility to the attacks on residents of the northeast. Given that the Nigerian government has a constitutional responsibility to protect everyone within its territory irrespective of their socioeconomic status, these results raise questions, and more concerns as expressed by an administrator:

There is a lack of trust by Nigerians in the government's genuine commitment to defeat the terrorists. These armed conflicts have negative impact on primary education in Nigeria. The main points of armed conflicts are numerous but specifically in the Northeast, parts of Northwest, the Northcentral and parts of the Southsouth where Boko Haram, armed banditry, herdsmen attacks and cultists, respectively, unleash violence on the population. The big attacks are in the Northeast, which has been experiencing intense conflict driven by the Boko Haram terrorist militia group. (Administrator, Northcentral zone)

There have been several narratives on the inability of the Nigerian government to defeat the group and restore security and sanity to the country. The results suggest that Nigerians especially those in the conflict affected regions are losing trust in the government's ability to defeat the terrorists. The concerns expressed by the administrator speaks to an important issue that cannot be ignored: lack of trust. When citizens no longer trust their government, it signifies danger, as things could fall apart. Primary education is one of the things that could fall apart if the state of insecurity continues. The geographical spread of the armed conflict across Nigeria is indicative of the challenge of insecurity facing the country, and the need for the Nigerian military and other security operatives to demonstrate sincere commitment towards addressing it. Such commitment will enable them to earn the trust of Nigerians. As a research participant puts it:

The government was initially "playing politics" with the terrorists rather than devising a strategy to defeat them. The consequence of the blame trade between Nigeria's federal government and politicians from the zone of the conflict (i.e. the Northeast) empowered the terrorist group to unleash terror on the country. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

This apparent division made it difficult for the government to contain the conflict when it first emerged in 2009. The claim of the research participant raises important questions given the series of attacks on innocent Nigerians by Boko Haram in the past 11 years despite consistent claims by the Nigerian military that the group had been defeated. At the centre of the conflict is the fate of school children, who depend on the Nigerian government for protection like every other Nigerians.

Other administrators echoed similar frustration which speaks to bigger issues in relation to how Nigeria found itself apparently under siege in the last decade. Boko Haram is notorious for using girls as weapons of war as expressed by an administrator from the Northeast of Nigeria:

Researcher, are you not aware of what happened in 2014 in this country and right here in the Northeast? Let me educate you in case you do not know. Almost 276 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram armed fighters, and the government initially thought it was a political game. By the time they realized that it was not a movie scene, the girls had been taken to the terrorists den in Sambisa⁸ forest. My sister [a Nigerian term for endearment to a female in conversation], for almost 4 years, they were not found. The Nigerian government eventually entered into an agreement with the terrorists and had 110 of them returned. As I speak with you, over 100 of those girls are still missing. Of those that returned alive, some had babies for their terrorist husbands and will live with the trauma for the rest of their lives. They used these girls most from poor homes as weapons of war, and that is so sad. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

An interesting dimension to the situation in northeastern Nigeria as indicated by administrators is that women and children are the major weapons of choice for Boko Haram. The use of girls by Boko Haram as weapons of war is not necessarily an accident but a consequence of an age long discrimination against women as expressed by a participant:

No one respects women. Boko Haram is part of the consequences of a society that pretends not to recognize discrimination against women. Complete disregard for women in high places means that at the home front, they are nothing and rarely appreciated. Perhaps if the opinion of women were sought earlier, a solution would have been found to this Boko Haram evil. Wise societies recognize the importance of women. It is a pity. The other day, one of my female students told me that she wished she was not born into a society like this. I tried my best to encourage her to see the good side of this country, but my dear, it is hard especially when some of her friends have been in Boko Haram captivity with no hope of ever returning, and those who returned came with babies with unknown terrorist fathers. Some parents now prefer to hide their daughters in the safety of their homes to avoid being kidnapped by Boko Haram in school. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

Administrators identified Boko Haram as a major security challenge that requires urgent attention. The age-long disrespect and discrimination against women was identified as one of the factors that

⁸ The Sambisa Forest is a forest in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. The forest, especially its mountainous region of Gwoza near the Cameroon border, is used as shelter by the jihadist Boko Haram terrorist group and is believed to be where they kept hostages from the 276 school girls kidnapped in 2014.

promoted the group's hatred for women. It therefore follows that while military strategies are being deployed in the fight against Boko Haram, the attitude towards women in northern Nigeria needs to change. Another administrator expressed similar sentiments:

The kidnapping of over 200 Chibok girls killed the interest of many parents in enrolling their children in school. I am not going to blame them at all. The government is not serious. They do not know that these children represent the future of this country. If we cannot guarantee their safety in school, our country is doomed. Boko Haram terrorist fighters and the problem they unleashed resulted in a situation whereby children especially had to be taken out of schools. In the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, no schools were provided and where some semblance of school was in progress no meaningful progress was made because no formal teachers are hired and no supplies and materials to help learning and monitoring of progress. Where teachers exist, they are too afraid to teach for fear of losing their lives to terrorists who do not spare these camps. This is a problem with dire consequences for our collective future, and a need for action now. (Administrator, Northeast zone)

For this administrator, the continued violence on girls is a result of the government not taking seriously this terrorist group. Until the real and present danger that such terrorist groups attend to the safety of girls, the administrator compellingly points out that the future of education will not be attained. A major sentiment shared by many research participants is that the Boko Haram terrorist group is major challenge to the implementation of the MDG 2. By sacking people and communities from their homes, Boko Haram's activities led to the creation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), scattered across several IDP camps in the country, which further increases the total number of Nigeria's out of school children. The total defeat of Boko Haram as indicated by this study is crucial to the attainment of universal primary education, especially in the northeast part of the country where they have maintained a prominent presence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the study across four broad themes: First, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 on universal primary education in Nigeria influenced by a disconnect between policy and practice at different levels. Second, the implementation of the goal which was influenced by sociocultural factors. Third, there were a number of socioeconomic drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2. Finally, sociopolitical factors equally emerged among the findings from the data and specifically addressed the research question by highlighting how the supports and constraints that have shaped Nigeria's capacity to meet the MDG 2 on universal primary education. The findings show that local interventions did make an important contribution that led to increased enrollment in school in alignment with the MDG 2. The

chapter also presented a number of constraints to the implementation of the goal indicating that unless urgent actions are taken, the barriers have the potential to threaten Nigeria's ability to attain universal primary education and the new development program SDG 4 with a focus on education. While there are some improvements in universal basic education, the implementation of such initiatives is hampered by inconsistent efforts between rural and urban areas, lack of alignment between agencies, and external political and economic realities that make any policy implementation incredibly challenging. These findings are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five - Discussion of Results

There is evidence that targeted initiatives have been implemented in attempts to improve universal primary education. School administrators were appreciative of local initiatives and the associated benefit, yet their frustration indicates that significant gaps still exist in relation to attainment of universal primary education. The analysis and discussion of study findings are presented along the lines of internal and external drivers and constraints to the implementation of the millennium development goal (MDG) 2.

Let me first turn to the internal factors.

Internal drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2

The internal drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 are factors within the education system. These include impact of poor supervision, monitoring, and coordination on universal primary education; complexities with the quality of teachers and quality of education; and the politics of free universal primary education.

Impact of poor supervision, monitoring and coordination on universal primary education. Administrators indicated that there were clear targeted policy initiatives in support of the universal basic education (UBE) policy and the implementation of the MDG 2. Notable in the findings was the evidence of training of teachers, the provision of instructional materials, and increased resources for infrastructural development. Despite the many positive intentions of the policy, there are a number of disconnects in practice.

First, administrators indicated that there was evidence of training of teachers to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. Second, they were impressed by the emphasis on student centred learning advocated by the UBE sponsored seminars and workshops, which is in the best interest of students. Finally, it was noticeable that there were attempts to provide in-service training of teachers to improve their qualifications, another area where the teachers training initiative through the UBE deserves commendation (Akpan & Ita, 2015).

While administrators thought that such initiatives were borne out of good intention, the intended aims were commonly unrealized. Specifically, administrators indicated that many teachers would leave their current teaching appointments following the completion of their studies for better opportunities elsewhere. In this respect, administrators noted that without an accountability of teachers to continue in their teaching placement, the initiative may actually undermine the original intent of providing more stability and quality of teaching in schools. Administrators commented that government authorities are not monitoring the movement of these teachers following their studies,

leaving schools at a greater disadvantage. They also believe that the abolition of teachers training colleges has had a negative impact on primary education. Since the only focus of these colleges was on teacher training, administrators reasoned that students enrolled in the colleges because they wanted to be teachers and were passionate about the profession. The curriculum was designed to meet the learning needs of children from elementary to grade 12. They regretted that the post-teachers training college era saw the influx into the classroom of applicants with limited or no relevant background in education. This finding is corroborated by researchers who noted that the defunct teachers training colleges produced professional teachers who had great knowledge and passion for teaching (Idris, 2018; Okpe & Onjewu, 2016). As many pursue teaching as a job to earn monthly salary rather than a career, administrators argued that the outcome is poor education delivered by unqualified teachers who had no passion for teaching.

Administrators believe that the practice whereby beneficiaries of in-service training opt for better opportunities rather than returning to the classroom is a result of the lack of coordination among the various agencies of government. These includes the State Universal Basic Education Board, Universal Basic Education, Local Education Authority, Ministries of Education, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education, and the National Commission for Nomadic Education, which emerged from this study as a major disconnect. This findings aligns with Bolaji et al. (2015) reasoning that multiple government agencies with overlapping and conflicting roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the UBE programme across the country could lead to challenges in the areas of coordination and communication. Administrators indicated that the lack of coordination is not limited to only the government agencies concerned with education, rather it is a system failure since these teachers are able to secure employment in other government ministries and parastatals with no consequence. Teachers' poor conditions of service in Nigeria, irregular payment of salaries, and poor incentive are among factors compelling teachers to seek other employment rather than remaining in the classroom (Egu, Nwuju & Chionye, 2011). Egu and her colleagues reasoned that the success of the UBE largely depends on the government addressing these concerns in order to make the classroom more attractive to teachers. Administrators believe that this practice in itself frustrates what would have been an important contribution of the UBE to the cause of universal primary education.

Some research participants expressed frustration with the fact that the government at the local, state and federal levels are not taking steps to challenge the problem. For them, the lack of advocacy or action by educational authorities to redress this gap suggests a particular complicity in allowing teachers not to be held accountable to their schools and students following the training of their programs. Nigeria's Minister of Education appears to support the position of school administrators following his acknowledgement that the challenge posed by poor quality of education including poor

teacher training calls for conscious attempts by all stakeholders to redeem the sector (Adesanya-Daniel, 2018). Without individuals returning to the classroom upon completion of their studies, the specific initiative is unrealized in its attempt to improve universal primary education in Nigeria.

Like the training of teachers, school administrators were appreciative for the provision of instructional and learning materials through the UBE and considered it as a welcome development. At a time when Nigeria ranks as the country with the highest number of people living in extreme poverty (Adebayo, 2018; Brookings Institution, 2018), such initiatives are commendable as it has the potential to reduce the financial pressure of children's schooling on parents. The provision of learning materials like exercise books, pencils and pens, and textbooks often make a significant difference especially to less privileged families with children in public schools. In more recent years, the provision of instructional materials to include information and communication technology devices such as iPads are notable. The intent of these devices is to allow teachers and students to gain more information online in support of their learning needs.

While the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) amenities such as iPads to improve the capacity of teachers and exposure to online resources is important, it also raises broader questions. For instance, administrators noted the financial constraints within their schools, and in particular, the common challenges such as irregular payment of teachers' salaries and pensions, unstable electricity, and absence of functional libraries. They commented that the purchase of iPads for schools is a misplaced priority as they will not be utilized. They also asserted that teachers are struggling to feed and cater for their families. The instability of teachers' salaries and the general financial insecurity felt by members of their teaching community is fundamentally at odds with maintaining the costs that are associated with owning an iPad, such as the requisite need to purchase internet data. Recognizing that ICT appears to be increasingly in use in schools across the world, school administrators were appreciative of the provision of iPads because of the positive influence it could have on the perception of parents to enrol their children given the exposure of their teachers. However, such provision fails to consider the underlying issues that are central to universal primary education. In some respects, iPads were a symbolic, if relatively empty, sign to show the parents that there were palpable improvements happening to the schools. For instance, three school administrators identified the lack of libraries in schools as one of the crucial areas where the UBE is failing. The absence of adequate functional libraries in public primary schools will put children at a disadvantage. This is because of the key role libraries play in children's development (Stejskal, Hajek, & Rehak, 2019). Fundamentally, primary schools are expected to provide the basic functions of reading and writing. However, administrators commented that many fundamental aspects of learning were difficult to teach, because basic supplies are inadequate. Ordinarily, this should be among the highest priorities in the delivery of universal basic education.

The provision of infrastructural facilities in the form of physical symbolic things by the UBE ranked among the ways local policy initiatives supported Nigeria's implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. Administrators commented that the fact that some parents were motivated by the presence of infrastructural facilities to enrol their children speaks to its importance as it gives them a sense of reassurance that they are learning in a conducive environment. Although school administrators commended the provision of such facilities, they expressed concerns with the inadequate provision and poor maintenance.

Administrators noted that there are series of complexities that impedes universal primary education. They maintained that the absence of toilets in public schools could be among the reasons why some parents would not want to enrol their children to minimize the risk of exposure to harm when pressed and resorting to using the bush. In 2015 for instance, 25% of Nigerians representing almost 46 million people were practicing open defecation (Mara, 2017). This is despite the fact that poor sanitation is a major contributor to high morbidity and mortality rates among children under five (UNICEF, 2018b), including 60,000 deaths among Nigerian children annually from sanitation related illnesses before reaching school age (Rigby, 2018). Administrators reasoned that given the importance of education and vulnerability of children, they expected provision of toilet in schools to be a priority at all levels of government (i.e. local, state, and federal) in Nigeria.

Administrators identified insufficient or lack of stakeholder engagement as it relates to universal primary education to be at the root of some of the challenges encountered in the implementation of the MDG 2. They maintained that the top-down approach to education policymaking decisions could be one of the major constraints to the implementation of universal primary education. This is despite the fact that stakeholders' participation in policy decision and implementation is considered to be an effective mechanism to ensure educational quality and development (Yaro, Arshad, & Salleh, 2016). Administrators expressed dismay at changes to the school curriculum including removal without their knowledge of certain subjects such as Family Life that they considered important to children's development. The research participants equally expressed frustration at the decision of the UBE headquarters to impose examinations on their teachers to administer and mark, even when they have no input in the setting of the questions. The inability of students to connect with some of the questions since it did not feature in the curriculum with which they were taught underscores the impact of poor coordination between the UBE authorities and school administrators. One can therefore argue that poor stakeholder engagement and communication pose a major challenge to the implementation of universal primary education.

Some administrators regretted that the lack of coordination among the various agencies of government creates an opportunity for some teachers and school administrators to embark on unethical

practices. They contend that inspectors often compromise their official assignment thereby leaving teachers to continue in their unethical practices. They noted that schools in rural areas bear most of the consequences of poor supervision, monitoring and coordination, because more priority is attached to schools in urban areas where decision makers are based, and where the quality of life is relatively better. The neglect of rural schools sends a signal that speaks to discrimination and social justice concerns, which do not align with the intention of the MDGs that centres on making lives better (United Nations, 2000a). Erginer and Ates (2009) argued that inspectors or supervisor of schools have essential responsibilities of ensuring that there is a solid understanding and interpretation of the goal of the school system. They maintained that inspectors have an important role of evaluating and comparing school conditions with required and acceptable standards, including filling existing gaps, identifying wrong practices and requesting changes, as well as getting rid of irrelevant processes with a view to creating an enabling environment for teaching and learning.

The activities of inspectors as noted by some administrators is a deviation as they expressed concern that the presence of so many agencies could also be among the reasons why school inspectors are not held accountable. For instance, some administrators frowned at the use of pupils to work on teachers' private farms in rural areas as an act of child labour. This parallels the research conducted by Inya (2017) in his observation that children are being turned to labourers by their teachers instead of acquiring education. He expressed dissatisfaction at some teachers who take undue advantage of children by making them to run errands such as working on their farms or fetching water or helping teachers with domestic chores. This leaves children with limited study time and subsequent poor performance.

Schools do not necessarily help in drawing the attention of relevant education or law enforcement authorities to the problem of child labour especially in relation to children absenteeism because of involvement in street hawking or other forms of child labour. Administrators commented that the absence of reliable data on primary education pose an important challenge. Data on issues like the number of children missing or dropping out from school are either unavailable or unreliable. The World Bank (2008) question the reliability of Nigeria's education statistics declaring that they cannot be trusted. There are implications of the dearth of data on planning, attendance and student achievement. Administrators believe that the number of out of school children in Nigeria could be more than what is reported as they do not believe that the country's data is robust enough. They expressed concern that simple things like teachers checking on parents to confirm a child's absence are not done as the teacher either do not have a comprehensive data on every-one or pressured by the pupil-teacher ratio in Nigerian primary schools which exert excessive pressure on teachers. They maintained that the pupil-teacher ratio contributes to poor quality of education as there is limit to what teachers can satisfactorily

manage and able to support. This speaks to a need for recruitment of more qualified teachers in primary schools.

Lack of coordination and disconnect are also evident in the implementation of the Early Childhood Education Policy. Some school administrators were appreciative of the confidence-building role of the policy in children in their early years, but expressed concern that pre-school attendance in line with the early childhood education policy is an area where Nigeria appears to be failing as there appears to be more emphasis on primary schools and institutions of higher learning than pre-school. In Nigeria public schools for pre-primary education are rare. Only private operators run such schools, which has become a society symbol for the rich. The children of the underprivileged or poor in the communities are left out of early childhood education because their parents cannot afford the school fees for the private schools. Eventually they are at a disadvantage when they get to primary schools. With an attendance rate of 13% and Sub-Saharan Africa's average of 20% (Psacharopoulos, 2015), one can argue that the Nigerian government needs to do more especially in the area of building new public schools for that age group or build structures in older schools as suggested by research participants. This is because investing in early childhood is known to have high social returns (Heckman, 2011), and pre-school contributes to improved performance in later years, minimize the urge in youths to commit crime, and help to reduce drop-out rates (Psacharopoulos, 2015).

Some administrators were critical of the increasing use of English language as the language of instruction instead of the mother tongue. This is despite the recognition of mother tongue as an important part of a child's education development (Mbah, 2012). Administrators also commented that the proliferation of pre-schools by private operators highlights a need for the government to start funding the program in all public schools across the country where administrators employed by the government can be held accountable.

Complexities with Quality of Teachers and Quality of Education. There are several factors affecting the quality of teachers and education in Nigeria. For instance, administrators indicated that the poor welfare of teachers is a threat to universal primary education especially as the zeal and motivation of teachers for teaching is on the decline. They reasoned that since many Nigerian teachers rely on their monthly salaries to survive, the amount and frequency of payment play important roles in teacher motivation. They believed that irregular and nonpayment of teachers' salaries by some state governments in Nigeria could have a long-lasting impact on primary education. Administrators disclosed that some teachers were owed salaries for almost nine months because of a screening exercise embarked upon by a state government in Nigeria. In other cases, school administrators indicated that teachers were only paid certain percentages of their salaries without explanation, resulting in trauma associated with nonpayment of salaries and the inability to meet their basic needs, with unpleasant

implications for universal primary education. The consequence of nonpayment of salaries is that some teachers are not motivated and therefore unable to give their pupils the best (Kontagora, Watts, & Allsop, 2018). Participants did not speak to the Federal Teachers' Scheme established by the Nigerian federal government in 2006 to address the shortage of qualified teachers in public primary and junior secondary schools. This is despite the fact that over 25,000 participants in the two-year internship program for unemployed National Certificate in Education graduates were absorbed by 27 states in the country. The inability of the participants to speak to the contribution of the initiative to universal primary education could have resulted either from lack of awareness or communication gap between the government and school administrators or they might have been overwhelmed by other challenges and failed to recognize the value in the government's effort. It could also be that the administrators had no involvement in the process and therefore unable to speak to it. This is important since some participants as outlined chapter 5 had faulted their lack of involvement in educational decision making and the prevalence of top-down approach on educational matters.

Administrators equally identified delays or nonpayment of retired teachers' gratuity and pensions by governments in Nigeria as another demotivating factor in primary schools. This is based on the perception that they might experience a fate similar to theirs. While issues relating to nonpayment of pensions are rare in developed societies, the case is different in Nigeria. Embezzlement of pensions and gratuity of retirees are no longer new stories in Nigeria as cases relating to prosecution of fraudulent government officials in pension offices abound (Adesomoju, 2018). Poor welfare of teachers will continue to be a major challenge to universal primary education in Nigeria (Kontagora, Watts, & Allsop, 2018). As teachers abandon their duty posts, or fail to show high level of commitment to their work due to any number of reasons, parents fail to be persuaded of the need to send their children to school..

Administrators believe that politicization in the recruitment of unqualified teachers is another factor affecting the quality of teachers and education. They assert that as elected officials are under pressure to fulfil campaign promises most of which often centre on employment creation, public primary schools become a target destination partly because of the low salaries. Most administrators measured the success of MDG 2 by the increase in school enrollment without much emphasis on the second and third indicators, which spoke to primary school completion and literacy rates respectively. By using that as the most important metric for measuring success, there is an apparent less emphasis on quality. For instance, over 21,700 out of 33,000 teachers in Kaduna, a major city in the Northwest region failed the grade 4 test administered to test their competence, thereby highlighting the problem of unqualified teachers in the classroom (Lawal, 2017). Some research participants noted that nepotism and tribalism in school appointments will continue to have negative impact on the quality of education as qualified personnel are often prevented from heading schools in parts of the country where they are

not indigenes. They believed that the preference in such parts for appointment of indigenes as school administrators or teachers rather than the adoption of merit criteria is a major age-long challenge. School administrators reasoned that inasmuch as there are unqualified teachers, there are also highly qualified ones, and that investment in regular training and professional development of teachers will improve their skills, allowing them to excel at their work, while the hiring of more qualified teachers will reduce pressure on existing teachers, especially in rural areas.

A headmaster observed that overcrowded classrooms resulting from either inadequate classrooms or shortage of teachers exert severe pressure on the ones available to teach. They maintained that with a class ratio of between 1:60 and 1:80 the children are missing out as close supervision by one teacher will be extremely difficult. This is despite the fact that the National Policy on Education set a standard primary school teacher – pupil ratio at 1:35 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). These statistics underscore a need for ownership at the government as poor performance of children in this case cannot necessarily be blamed entirely on the teacher.

Research participants indicated that the quality of education in public schools is also affected by the ‘ghost worker’ syndrome. Ibukun (2011) reported that the ghost worker syndrome, which includes instances where public sector employees give fictitious employment to newborn babies and other family members, is endemic in Nigeria and that it has moved corruption to an advanced level. Administrators maintained that certain officials take undue advantage of the system thereby leaving children as the ultimate victim. Idoko (2017) stated that Nigeria has over 207, 000 fake and unqualified teachers in primary schools leading to poor quality outcome at the primary school level. The implication of this is that when primary school graduates can hardly read or write due to poor education quality, parents hardly find convincing reasons to send their children to school since there are hardly any differences between those who attended primary schools and those who did not.

Administrators contend that unless something is fundamentally done to address the challenge posed by unqualified teachers, the consequences for the country’s collective future are enormous. They believed that it is not necessarily a public versus private school issue, rather it is one that threatens the right of the child to good education. They equally identified examination malpractice delivered through miracle centres to be among the causes of low quality of education. “Miracle centre” is a special name, in local parlance, given to examinations centres where candidates do not need to study to pass, since all that is required to pass is to pay the charges of the “miracle workers” (Igwe, Ogadi, & Nwokobia, 2018; Onyedinefu, 2019). The miracle workers in this case are agents recruited by the centres to help candidates cheat their way to success. These centres are often disguised as private schools or coaching centres. Aworinde (2015) reported that these centres charge various examination fees and provide an enabling environment for students to cheat. Despite the ban imposed on the operation of miracle centres by the Nigerian Parliament in 2012 (Asomba, 2012; Atueyi, 2019), administrators found that the

problem is yet to go away as parents are actively patronizing them to guarantee their children's 'success' in examinations. Administrators agreed that the problem of unqualified teachers in classrooms will ultimately lead to malpractice as it is difficult for incompetent teachers to produce competent students. It therefore follows that while enrolment appears to be the most popular focus in the implementation of the MDG 2, it might not deliver the required standard of education.

The Politics of Free Universal Primary Education. Administrators disclosed that free education is not absolutely free in reality since parents who may be willing to send their children to school sometimes cannot afford to do so as a result of other expenses that may arise from their children attending schools. These other expenses include school uniforms in some cases, books and learning materials, sport fee, and parents-teachers association (PTA) levies. Administrators indicated that sport levies collected from pupils are normally handed over to the local education authority who neither provide the sport facilities nor tender any explanation as to why they are not provided, and levy not refunded. This again raises the spectre of accountability and poverty and its implications for enrolment of children in schools. Thus, the inability of the country to firmly implement free education in primary schools leaves poor family with the option of not sending their children to school since they consider education to be expensive.

The contradictions by the government came to the fore at the swearing in of two state governors in Nigeria's southwest and northwest on May 29, 2019. Babalola (2019) reported that a governor in the southwest scrapped school fees of US\$8 in all public primary and secondary schools to address the problem of 400,000 out of school children in his state. Another state governor in the northwest declared free education for all children of school age (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). While these pronouncements are at the surface level commendable, it highlights the bigger question of sincerity and genuine commitment of the government to education. The expectation since the UBE policy was signed into law in 2004 is that education in public primary schools is already free (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

Administrators acknowledged the contribution of the parent-teacher associations, African traditional, and religious institutions towards the implementation of the MDG 2 through creation of awareness campaigns in communities, at marriage ceremonies, places of worship and during school events. The research participants believed that these groups helped to remove barriers to enrolment by challenging their communities to take advantage of the good intention of education for their children. This speaks to the difference citizens can make in the implementation of government policies. The PTA for instance equally pay levies to support the shortfalls in schools. It will be inappropriate however for schools to be seen to be relying on such levies in order to buy instructional material such as chalk as indicated by administrators. This is because income generated through the PTA are often not enough

to meet the needs of schools (Gokyer & Alpinanc, 2014). The foregoing suggests that conversations among relevant stakeholders around levying needs to occur.

External Facilitators and Impediments to the Implementation of MDG 2

The external facilitators and impediments to the implementation of MDG 2 are factors outside the education system. These include the use of local initiatives to combat challenges to universal primary education, the challenge of poverty to the implementation of MDG 2, the impact of misplacement of priority on universal primary education, and the long-term impact of armed conflict and violence on education.

The use of local initiatives to combat challenges to universal primary education. Administrators commended Nigeria's National Home Grown School Feeding Program (NHGSFP) for its positive impact on school enrolment as it encouraged parents to send their children to school. The NHGSFP is a local policy initiative first introduced by the Nigerian government in 2004 as part of strategies to address poverty, improve health and education of children towards achievement of the MDG 2 on universal basic education (Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2017). At the second launch of the program in 2016 following an initial pause, the government declared that it aims to feed 24 million public primary school children at full implementation thereby making it the largest school feeding initiative in Africa, with a program cost of US\$1.8 million daily and almost US\$183 million already invested (FGN, 2017). Administrators expressed concern that some schools have no access to the program and argued for a need to urgently extend it to all schools across Nigeria to make enrolment more attractive. Administrators observed that the program will help to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger among children and their parents. Since lack of food prevents children from attending primary school (UNICEF, 2019), school feeding programs like the one in Nigeria is a strategic approach aimed at reaching the most vulnerable children (Borish, King, & Dewey, 2017). If faithfully implemented according to its stated objective, the program could lead to improved attendance and performance in schools.

The challenge of poverty to the implementation of MDG 2. Administrators identified poverty as a major constraint to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal on universal primary education. Street hawking by children is a common practice in most Nigerian cities where economic activities are concentrated, administrators contend that these children have become victims of the negative consequences of child labour such as sexual molestation, crime and violence, and insufficient study time, all in the quest for family survival. An estimated 14 million children, representing 19.5 per cent of the 72.1 million victims of child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, are from Nigeria, with the continent accounting for 43 per cent of the 152 million child labour victims across the world (International Labour Organization, 2019; Okeke, 2015). Administrators expressed mixed

feelings with the challenge they often encounter when attempting to discourage parents from the practice. This is because while financial success is not the whole essence of education, it is difficult to convince some parents otherwise in a country with the world's highest incident of extreme poverty (Adebayo, 2018). There is no doubt that education is important because of its numerous economic and non-economic benefits (Kazeem, Jensen & Stokes, 2010). However, administrators noted that some parents, in the face of poverty, are not necessarily interested in the non-economic benefits of education, rather, they are looking for quick survival strategies with quick returns. The World Bank (2019) reported that Nigeria remains with high levels of poverty with almost 70 million people living below the poverty line of less than US\$1.90 a day. The country has also overtaken India as having the greatest number of cases of extreme poverty in the world (Adebayo, 2018; Brooking Institutions, 2018).

Administrators identified the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) initiative of the Nigerian government as one of the strategies to directly support those within the lowest poverty bracket by improving nutrition, increasing household consumption and supporting the development of human capital including schooling through cash benefits to various categories of the poor and vulnerable. The initiative is part of the National Social Investment Programmes rolled out by the Nigerian government in 2016 with the expectation that the poorest and most vulnerable Nigerians will get access to social safety nets by 2021 through a US\$500 million International Development Assisted credit facility approved by the World Bank (World Bank, 2016). Onehi (2017) reported that the programme in Nigeria gives US\$13 to the vulnerable and poorest in the society every month, payable bi-monthly US\$26, which translates to 6 payments per year. The programme contributes to alleviating poverty and promoting skill development to beneficiaries to become self-reliant. While commending the government for the programme, administrators are yet to understand the magnitude of impact it would make on primary education. They also believed that the bi-monthly payment needs an upward review given the harsh economic realities facing families.

Another dimension to poverty noted by administrators is the Almajiri system. They commented that for many years, the Almajiri dominated Northern Nigeria where religious instructors with extreme views indoctrinate children. Administrators expressed concern that the present day Almajiri system is a deviation from these values as it describes children under the age of eighteen who have become street beggars that often take proceeds to their Islamic master, and thereby inadvertently making themselves available as tools for terrorists. They maintained that the children suffer systemic exclusions and deprivations, which further complicates their plight, including physically and socially unhealthy exposure. Three school administrators indicated that if properly mentored, the children in the almajiri system represents a vast opportunity awaiting investment. They asserted that while the system has posed a serious security challenge to Nigeria, it is also a major constraint to the attainment of universal basic education in these zones. It therefore follows that the almajiri system poses a threat to security

and schooling on one hand, and a great opportunity to be harnessed on the other. Ordinarily, the idea of sending children to gain deeper Islamic education is a good one. But in many northern states over the years, these boys have been left to fend for themselves hence they grow up to become a social problem (Adeniyi, 2020).

Participants did not speak to the Almajiri Education Programme established by the Nigerian federal government (see chapter 2) to address the challenge posed by children in the Almajiri system. The reason for this could be lack of awareness on their part. It could also be that administrators were unsure of the state of the programme since some state governments in northern Nigeria had challenge the federal government's plan to integrate Almajiri system into basic education (Alechenu, 2016). Adeniyi (2020) reported that the Almajiri schools constructed by the government under the programme had either been abandoned or not put to proper use. This further speaks to disconnect between the government's intention and what is obtainable in practice. It also raises questions in relation to the political will of some state governors whose cooperation is needed to actualize the federal government's plans. Even though Nigeria's national security adviser had warned that the Almajiri system represents a fertile breeding ground for insecurity in the country (Mohammed, 2019), some northern governors still fail to see the urgency in the situation. Since the children in the system are under eighteen (Adeniyi, 2020; Agupusi, 2019), one expects that state governments will take advantage of the Almajiri Education Programme, and create incentives to encourage them to go to school.

The negative impact of corruption and misplacement of priority. Administrators commented that misplacement of priorities and corruption were among the constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 and the misplaced priorities by the government has continued to have a negative impact on universal primary education. They maintained that when one considers the challenges posed by misplaced priorities and corruption by some state governments or elected officials, it is hard to accept any claim that Nigeria is poor or need international aid. The poor funding of education might therefore not necessarily be as a result of the absence of funds. This raises questions as to the relevance of international aid at a time when state governments spend public funds on unproductive initiatives.

Administrators condemn the use of public funds on marriages for private citizens. Adeniyi (2019) reported that a state government in Nigeria spent US\$0.7 million to sponsor 1,500 marriage ceremonies for private citizens. He lamented that at a time when many children are out of school with a large population of uneducated Almajiri children in the state, it is difficult to understand why a government would deliberately ignore the fundamental human right of children for such frivolity. Administrators believed that the government's action will only promote a culture of dependence rather than hard work. One could therefore argue that some of the challenges hindering Nigeria from meeting

the MDG 2 are self-inflicted and could have been avoided. While the British indirect rule and its refusal to promote primary education in northern Nigeria is often blamed for the educational backwardness of the region (Fagbumi, 2005; McIntyre, 1982), evidence from this research suggest that there are other factors prominent among which is the northern elite. Since it is now almost sixty years that the British indirect rule ended in the country, attributing blame to the colonialists will do little to address the challenges to primary education especially in northern Nigeria. Nigeria has been governed by Nigerians since 1960 and therefore cannot blame anyone for the educational backwardness of any of its region. This is important given the fact that the country discovered crude oil in commercial quantity in 1956 and had accrued significant oil wealth that could have made it one of the most livable nations on earth, with a well developed and educated citizens. The findings of this research suggest that it is time for the country to look inwards for a solution to the challenges in its primary education sector. A change of attitude would feature as part of the solution.

Administrators equally frowned at the use of public funds by some state governments to sponsor Nigerians for private pilgrimage in the holy lands of Mecca and Jerusalem. The practice as well as the tradition whereby some state governments use public funds to feed people during the holy month of Ramadan to break fast⁹ has come under criticism (Adeoye & Alagbe, 2017; Eleonu & Madume, 2019; Owete, 2004; Punch, 2018). That the practice has continued despite criticisms over the years raises question especially at a time when Nigeria is facing the challenge of poverty and large number of out of school children.

The foregoing highlights the complexities and challenges to the implementation of universal primary education in Nigeria. It might therefore not be out of place to reflect on the position of administrators that Nigeria might not necessarily need international development aid in order to educate its out of school children, since misplacement of priorities as echoed by the research participants appears to be an important problem. It is against this background that Angus Deaton (a winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics) reasoned that a significant part of the US\$135 billion spent by most developed countries on official aid in 2014 may not have necessarily reached the poor to tackle extreme poverty (Swanson, 2015) and other development concerns. This closely aligns with Moyo's (2009) argument that the US\$1 trillion development assistance to Africa in the past six decades have left the continent worse off. Moyo proposed alternatives by encouraging African nations to gain access to international market bonds, forge a new and strong relationship with China and to a lesser degree emerging economies such as India and Brazil on issues regarding trade and investment, aspire for genuine global free trade in agrarian products, and improve economic growth through enhanced system

⁹ The act of fasting is a religious obligation practiced mostly by Muslims and some Christians in Nigeria. Muslims normally fast in the holy month of Ramadan, while Christians especially Catholics fast during the Lenten season. Some Christians and Muslims do not necessarily follow this, as they fast at their convenience.

for microfinance and remittances. While Moyo's proposal sound ambitious and can be considered a sound way of thinking, there are concerns as he appeared to have narrowly perceived development only in terms of economic growth. This is because development transcends beyond economic growth to poverty reduction with sustainable living standards or the targets associated with the MDGs. Since development means different things to different authors, the failure of Moyo to clearly state her understanding of development makes it difficult to completely evaluate her argument. Moyo's proposal of African aid independence is desirable and long overdue. However, she complicates her position by advising Africa on the one hand to abandon aid from the developed world and turn to China instead. Encouraging Africa to embrace China through signing of many development and trade agreements without clearly highlight how Africa fits into China's global strategic plan makes it look like leaving one form of aid dependency for another one. The counsel to embrace China contradicts Moyo's argument as presented in *Dead aid* whose overall thesis is that an aid-free Africa will be an independent Africa. Despite the controversial nature of Moyo's work, he raised an important topic that will dominate conversation on African aid dependence versus independence for a long time. While in-country capacity building is essential especially for a country like Nigeria, out-right suspension of development aid from the developed world in favour of China is too risky as it will be like putting all of one's eggs in a single basket. That notwithstanding, as Nigeria looks forward to that day when it can become aid independent, accountability is extremely necessary in the management of development aid.

The impact of insecurity on education. Administrators suggest that insecurity has reached a height never seen before in Nigeria especially kidnapping for ransom, which is now a highly sophisticated crime in the country. They reasoned that while it is a threat to universal primary education, there are other implications that might not immediately appear obvious. For instance, insecurity in all its forms discourage investment especially by foreign investors. As there is no other time that Nigeria needs foreign investment than now given the unfavourable verdict on its poverty rate, the government's strategy at addressing insecurity raises questions. Administrators contend that there is no doubt that whatever strategy the Nigerian security agencies have been adopting towards combatting insecurity especially kidnapping for ransom is not working. They maintained that a discussion of kidnapping and organized crime in Nigeria is incomplete without mentioning the role of high rate of employment and poverty in the country. With an increasing population currently at almost 200 million people, and increasing number of graduates without jobs, administrators reasoned that crime seems to fill the vacuum. Going by the information from these administrators, one could be tempted to state that there is currently no indication that the security situation in Nigeria will improve soon.

The research participants also indicated that armed conflict was a primary constraint to the implementation of the MDG on education in Nigeria, which directly impeded on universal primary

education. Administrators expressed concern that armed conflict has led to an increase in early marriage of young school age girls, and a greater chance of children been held hostage or kidnapped while they attend schools. They highlighted one of the implications as difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers due to the risk and instability of the work environment. Importantly, they maintained that long-term armed conflict has created economic instability, which puts increased pressure for children to stay home rather than attend school. UNICEF (2019) reported that the impact of armed conflict in Nigeria's northeast on children and teachers is devastating with long lasting effects. Taken together, the very real and present instability of the country puts attainment of the universal primary education in peril.

Administrators indicated that the implications of armed conflict in Nigeria are enormous with long-term consequences and there is a high sense of pessimism on possible progress even in the long term. This implies that if the present situation portrays a general instability due to the war time conditions in some parts of Nigeria, then there are significant long-term impacts of what that will do for the future vitality of the nation, particularly in relation to the sustainable development goal on education. There is doubt about the ripple effects of the current conditions of trying to educate children presently, and administrators indicates a deep concern about the future effects of the current violent political climate in the country.

It is difficult to know how widespread these sentiments are, but it is easy to recognize the deep sense of loss and pessimism that are portrayed by these school administrators. Their feelings of dismay and general scepticism are a microcosm of the general feelings among educators and administrators especially in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, which is home to Boko Haram, whose name literally translated means "western education is forbidden" (Dunn, 2018; UNESCO, 2018). Though the Nigerian government has pushed them back into the Sambisa forest where they have had their base, they still cast a long shadow of fear over much of the region and even beyond.

Some administrators disclosed that displacement by armed conflict is a key barrier to the implementation of the MDG 2 with the potential to affect the SDG 4 in the same way. The North-central zone of Nigeria has been bedeviled by herdsmen attacks on villages for nearly a decade. Thousands of lives have also been lost, villages have been sacked and their population displaced (Omokhoa & Okuchukwu, 2018). Women and children are the most affected. Administrators indicated that schools have been burnt or closed down and both teachers and pupils are more often out of school than in school. They expressed concern that in neighboring communities to those that have been attacked, almost every activity is done half-heartedly, in anticipation of possible attacks. They maintained that the thousands of children in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps without access to education pose a great danger to the country. Even where some semblance of school exists, research

participants indicated that there is no guarantee that the quality of education is high because of limited or total absence of formal hiring of teachers. Since IDPs camps are also not immune to attacks by armed terrorists, some teachers are too afraid to support student learning in such environment. As the conflict scenario do not appear to be abating, one could say that it might eventually be among the factors that would determine how far Nigeria could go in ensuring that all children are in school. Unfortunately, these armed conflicts and their challenges to education are not limited to northern Nigeria. Administrators indicated that the activities of cultists is another form of violence common in Nigeria's Southsouth region. The decision of the state governor to involve traditional rulers in the fight against cultism (Akasike, 2019) is commendable. Perhaps such strategy might help. It is only a matter of time to know if his approach is making the desired impact.

Administrators found two equally important dimensions to early marriage conversation. First, while some parents in the Southeast and Southsouth educate their daughters to empower them and to equally attract higher bride prices, some parents in the north strongly believe that handing out their daughters in early marriage has the advantage of ensuring they married as virgins, which attract higher bride prices and preserve cultural traditions. Although the government has started frowning at the practice of early marriage, administrators suggest that in the absence of stringent penalties, some parents appear to have no plan of stopping the practice. This is despite the fact that early marriage has the potential to prevent women from living up to their dreams while rendering them voiceless in the society. Research participants noted that although Nigeria has laws, the challenge lies with implementation. Administrators also believe that the need to address the challenge posed by early marriage to girls' schooling is important because education is both a human right and a powerful tool for women's empowerment. The girl-child who receives formal education is healthier, able to participate more in the labour market, earn more income for her family, and does not bear many children beyond what the family can adequately cater for (Klugman, Hanmer, Twigg & Maria, 2014). At no other time in Nigeria is this more crucial than now when the country ranks among the countries with the world's highest number of out of schoolchildren (UNESCO, 2016). Research participants noted the award of scholarships by some states in the northwest to girls to encourage schooling as a strategy towards discouraging early marriage. While this is commendable, they faulted the exclusion of boys maintaining that with incidents of child labour in Nigeria, many boys from poor homes equally deserve scholarships. The Almajiri system where boys from poor homes roam the streets to beg for alms (Agupusi, 2019; Nnam, Arua & Otu, 2018) is an example of boys equally deserving scholarships.

Second, administrators indicated that the insecurity created by Boko Haram appears to be legitimizing early marriage, which is not a good development for the girl-child, and by implication the future of Nigeria. They reasoned that early marriage and the associated limited education and economic opportunities that comes with it condemns the girl child to the avoidable life of poverty and a violation

of her fundamental human rights. For the girls, early marriage defined as marriage before reaching the age of 18, is not in their best interest (United Nations, 2000b). As a matter of fact, about 58 million girls in developing countries representing one in three were married off before their 18th birthday, many against their will, and in deliberate violation of established international laws and conventions on the rights of women (Clifton & Frost, 2011). This poses an important challenge to the implementation of universal primary education.

Administrators disclosed that in the absence of a guaranteed security for children, parents cannot be entirely blamed for resorting to unconventional ways of ensuring that their children especially girls remain alive, by either keeping them at home or marrying them off at an early age. Claims by successive governments in Nigeria since the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009 that the terrorists have been defeated appears to be a mirage, as attacks perpetrated by the group has continued. It therefore follows that if the military with all their training and weapons are unable to match Boko Haram, it raises questions if parents are to blame for marrying off their daughters to 'safety'. Administrators believe that to these parents, early marriage protects their daughters, who are at risk of unspeakable violence at schools.

School administrators equally reasoned that the poor bears the major brunt of the Boko Haram attacks. They maintained that rich and powerful Nigerians, including military and political leaders and their families reside in Abuja and Lagos (the capital and commercial capital cities of the country respectively), comfortably immune to the devastating attacks in the northeast. In their opinion, the continuous escalation of the conflict could be because these rich and powerful people are not directly affected. There are social justice implications of this claim. Administrators asserted that Boko Haram's operations has no doubt exposed the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria and the widening gap in the face of a seemingly helpless military has created a situation where the poor becomes easy recruits for the terrorist group to perpetuate their mayhem. They also condemn the use of girls as weapons of war by Boko Haram, a practice that is documented in literature (Kaplan, 2015). Since 2009 when Boko Haram launched an Islamic Jihad against Nigeria, hundreds of schools have been burnt down or closed, thousands of people have been killed, millions displaced and hundreds of thousands of school children have left school (Ordu, 2017; Winsor, 2018). Since insecurity poses a significant threat to universal primary education, it therefore follows that prioritization of the safety of parents and children could feature as one of the strategic approaches towards implementation of MDG 2.

The insecurity situation in Nigeria's northeast compelled Dr. Goodluck Jonathan the Nigerian President in 2015 to hire private military and security companies labelled as mercenaries by Africans to support the Nigerian military in counterinsurgency operations (Varin, 2018). The personnel from these companies were viewed by the Nigerian media and the local population in the northeast with

contempt and disappointment. This complication aligns with Galula's (1964) *Counterinsurgency Warfare* which remains at the top of contemporary military reading list despite being over four decades old. In his first law of counterinsurgency, Galula argued that the support of the population is paramount. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to exterminate insurgents and permanently stop further recruitment without the support of the population. The Nigerian President at the time of this research (Mr. Muhammadu Buhari) blamed the elders of the north-east for unending Boko Haram attacks. The President maintained that their lack of cooperation with the military is frustrating the government's efforts. He reasoned that the insurgents cannot boldly move into the region to launch attacks without the knowledge of the local leadership (Premium Times, 2020). The northern elders forum later criticized the President for apportioning such blame, arguing that what Nigeria is in dire need of a solution and not time to trade blames (ThankGod, 2020). There is no doubt that Boko Haram was able to unleash havoc because of the Nigerian government's failure at the early stage to figure out their real intention (Comolli, 2015). Perhaps that would have enabled the military to properly strategize to conquer the group. The failure of the Nigerian government to seek an understanding of the real motives of Boko Haram could have been responsible for the devastation caused by the group. Thurston (2017) noted that the devastation includes the loss of lives, destruction of properties and contested territories. It also includes displacement of millions of people, with many of them facing hunger and starvation, as well as long-term uncertainties about how the crisis will affect politics and society in Nigeria and countries in the Lake Chad region such as Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. Thurston's analysis that poverty in the northeast was exacerbated by the government's failure to provide basic education aligns with the findings of this research especially in relation to corruption by the elite misplacement of priorities. For a region that was already suspicious of western education, Nigerian politicians and technocrats some of whom were products of the system could have proved the population wrong by improving the quality of lives and providing basic amenities. Thurston maintained that this was not the case as literacy was, and remains, shockingly low. As technocrats and politicians presided over a corrupt system that enriched only a few at the expense of the majority, resentment grew against the elite. Boko Haram's rejection of western education as noted by Thurston therefore should not have come to anyone as a surprise. This explains why military action alone can do little to end the conflict. Efforts to contain the conflict is equally complicated by the fact that western powers have left these political and socioeconomic drivers of the conflict largely untouched.

Research participants expressed frustrations at strategies to end the menace of Boko Haram and overall insecurity in the country especially the northeast. Defeating insurgency may also require Nigeria tapping into Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. According to Galula, insurgents lack power, but their advantage lies in intangible assets such as ideology through which they brainwash people, and general lack of responsibility. Since they are known for breaking their own promises and social norms,

counterinsurgency with its monopoly of tangible assets such as material resources and legitimate power can defeat insurgency through a coordinated approach. While Galula's principles holds great promise, the complexity of the Nigerian insurgency situation requires a purposeful leadership and highly determined and cooperative followership. This is important since Boko Haram operating since 2009 appears to be so powerful that they are known to have even successfully killed military personnel and over-riden military installations with least resistance. There have been complicity about diversion of funds meant for purchase of military equipments to defeat the insurgents in Nigeria's northeast (Ojo, Lamidi, Odewale, Shiyanbade & Ihemeje (2019). There have also been cases of revolt among junior military personnel against the senior military authorities for sending them to war with insurgents with inadequate supply of equipments. Banini (2020) argued that corruption in the Nigerian defence sector sadly weakened the capacity of the military to respond to security threats swiftly, thereby empowering Boko Haram. Boko Haram has become a major security threat to other country's in West Africa's Lake Chad region (Comolli, 2015).

While Galula's principle is a good strategy for defeating insurgency if effectively applied, certain things needs to be in place like a true sense of purpose and determination by the military to end the insurgency. This is necessary as the diversion of funds meant for purchase of military equipments to exterminate insurgency is inhuman and makes it look as if some people are getting enriched by the pain of Nigerians. withlexity of the insecurity situation in Nigeria

The role of education in defeating armed conflict. Administrators indicate that armed conflict has a negative impact on primary education in Nigeria. They noted that flash points of armed conflicts are numerous but specifically in the Northeast, parts of Northwest, the Northcentral and parts of the Southsouth where Boko Haram, armed banditry, herdsmen attacks and cultists, respectively, unleash violence on the population. The administrators commented that most of the challenges posed by armed conflicts are in the Northeast, which has been experiencing intense conflict driven by the Boko Haram terrorist militia group since 2009.

Nigeria's Northeast has the lowest level of education and is also the most insecure part of the country (Murray-Bruce, 2018). Administrators indicated that the solution to the terrorism inspired by Boko Haram operating most in the Northeast lies beyond the killing of the terrorists. This is based on their belief that there is no guarantee that the killing of terrorists can defeat terrorism. They maintained that good education is required to defeat terrorism, while noting that the failure of governments to effectively address the educational gaps in the Northeast created a fertile ground for school age children to be recruited by extremists. They therefore perceived the emergence of the MDG on education as a right move by the United Nations with the intention of making a positive difference. The position of the administrators in relation to using good education to fight terrorism has the potential to inspire new

conversation in Nigeria on strategies for resolving the decade old conflict in order to create more access to universal primary education.

Administrators noted that Nigerians are living in fear in their own country. They reasoned that the commitment of the government to addressing the increasing insecurity is questionable as one security challenge after another appears to be surfacing frequently. This raises questions about the intelligence gathering in the country where security outfits are now defined by their reaction to attacks rather than being proactive to avert such attacks.

Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the research and specifically addressed the research question by highlighting how local policy initiatives supported or constrained Nigeria's capacity to meet the millennium development goal 2 on universal education. The chapter argued that local policy initiatives did make important contributions that led to increased school in alignment with the MDG 2, however, many gaps and challenges remain. Central to these gaps are issues regarding misplacement of priorities and lack of strategic and sustainability planning. The failure of the Nigerian government to see the connection between the local policy initiatives designed to support schooling and external issues in the broader Nigerian society means that the desired universal primary education for all children requires more than fixing issues in the immediate school environment.

The chapter indicates that unless urgent actions are taken, the barriers that hindered the implementation of MDG 2 have the potential to threaten Nigeria's capacity to meet the SDG 4, which succeeded the MDG 2. SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The internal and external factors cannot be treated in isolation as both needs to be addressed before Nigeria can achieve universal primary education for all children. There are currently enormous challenges that requires urgent attention.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

This research set out to evaluate the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal primary education in Nigeria. The research aim was to critically appraise the supports and constraints that have shaped Nigeria's capacity to meet the MDG 2 on universal primary education. The focus of MDG 2 was to:

Achieve universal primary education: Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (United Nations, 2000a, p. 5).

This chapter combines the major findings of the study and highlights its contributions to the discourse on the drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 in Nigeria, with a view to positioning the country to maximize the gains, and remove barriers that could impede the implementation of the sustainable development goal (SDG) 4. The SDGs being the successor of the MDGs (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2015) could be likened to a second chance given to Nigeria to address the gaps in its implementation of the MDG 2.

Summary of major findings

This study finds, and argues that the relationship between the drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education is complex. Four overarching findings emerged from this study. First, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 on universal primary education in Nigeria was influenced by a disconnect between policy and practice at different levels. Second, sociocultural factors also influenced the effectiveness of implementation. Third, there were a number of socioeconomic drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2. Finally, sociopolitical factors equally emerged among the findings from the data. Taken together, the nature of the findings suggests that the official policy of the MDG 2 is inextricably tied to the political, economic, and local lived experiences in both urban and rural Nigeria. While policy initiatives established to facilitate the implementation of the MDG 2 are commendable, there appears to be a disconnect in practice. This is because some of the information gathered from research participants in relation to realities on ground do not reflect the content and spirit of the policy. That notwithstanding, the research found that the policy initiatives made certain positive contributions to the implementation of the MDG. A summary of the four major findings of this study is integrated into the following subsections in alignment with the research aim and objectives.

Drivers of the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal primary education

The findings indicate that the passage of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy by the Nigerian government in 2004 as a strategy for implementation of the MDG 2 resulted in a large number of

enrolment of children of primary school age. Net enrolment rose from 60% in 1995 prior to the coming of the MDG 2 to 70% in 2001 in the early years of the MDGs. Enrolment rose to 84% at the end of 2004 when the UBE policy was signed into law. It peaked at 88.8% in 2008 following active implementation of the policy. The decline started in 2011 at 59% ending at 54% in 2013 partly as a result of insurgency that led to the destruction of many schools with school children constituting a large size of the internally displaced population. ars of the MDGs. There is still an unacceptable number of children of school age not enrolled in schools, but the improvement has been encouraging. One of the anchors of the UBE policy is to provide free and compulsory primary education. Poverty has been recognized at all levels as a major barrier to primary education for many parents and their wards. Many parents cannot afford the necessary tuition and other school fees, especially when they have several children to put through schools. Mitigating the problem of poverty by eliminating school fees in primary education provided every child equal opportunity to receive primary education irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. The study found out that free primary education was a great incentive for many parents to send their children and wards to school. The noticeably high rate of enrolment following the UBE policy is a direct positive response to this initiative.

Another important tenet of the UBE programme that helped in increasing enrolment in primary schools across the country is the provision of free instructional materials for teachers and learning materials for pupils in schools. Instructional materials such as textbooks, workbooks, and graphic organizers such as flow charts, charts, tables, diagrams and others are used by teachers to foster learning. The provision of learning materials such as writing materials e.g. exercise books, pen and pencils, textbooks, and others are a welcome development. This is important because it eliminated one of the costs, relatively large costs for that matter, of educating children. As already pointed out poverty has been a major barrier to many parents sending their children to school because they could not afford to purchase textbooks and exercise books and other learning materials for their children. To place this in context, some people may have three to four or more children of primary school age for whom they are expected to purchase learning materials for. In situations where they need to choose between providing food for the family and purchase learning materials for the education of their children, food always prevails. Children are then sent out to the streets to hawk, learn a trade or perform some labour to increase family income. By eliminating school fees and providing free learning materials, the costs of educating children is no longer borne by the parents who now feel more inclined to send them to schools. There is hope especially if the gross inadequate supply of instructional and learning materials is addressed by the government.

Additionally, the UBE programme provides funds for construction of new classroom and other facilities and the renovation of old ones in the primary schools. Many schools wear new looks that attract out-of-school children, who also impress it on their parents that they would like to attend. Along

with free learning materials and no school fees to pay, parents found it easy to let those who are interested in attending schools.

The UBE policy equally facilitated access to teacher training and retraining. Funds are provided through the programme for in-service training of teachers, where teachers enrol in institutions of higher education and acquire additional qualifications while still fully employed by the government. This has boosted the morale of teachers, improved the quality of teaching and learning, and have also motivated and incentivised parents to send their children to attend schools.

The study also found that the Home-Grown School Feeding initiative first introduced by the Nigerian government in 2005 contributed to the implementation of the MDG 2 by driving up enrolment. Participants argued that the program made a significant contribution towards reducing the number of out of school children by addressing hunger, which is a major concern to many Nigerian families. The initiative is a major relief to parents as they are sure of a guaranteed meal for their children in school. School age children also find this an incentive and motivation to be in school rather than away from it. That the meals provided comes at no cost to families made the initiative to be a welcome development.

The work also found that the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education provided the enabling environment for the promotion of gender parity in school enrolment. Most research participants from northern Nigeria, which has a high prevalence of early marriage among girls, commended the government as they perceived the policy as a right step towards promoting enrolment of the girl-child in schools. Some state governments in the northern part of Nigeria have initiated scholarship schemes targeted at the girl-child that would guarantee funding for their education beyond the primary school level. Along with awareness and sensitisation programmes aimed at parents to encourage them to send their female children to schools, there is hope that the northern part of Nigeria could witness high levels of enrolment of the girl-child in schools if such initiatives are fully implemented. According to research participants in that part of the country, the response has been encouraging so far even though they noted that there is still much work left to be done to achieve an acceptable level of enrolment.

The Early Childhood Education Policy equally featured in this study as an important local initiative that ultimately contributes to the goal of universal basic education for all children. The policy enables operators to provide education to children under age five. Such confidence building opportunities enables most children to be ready by the time they get to primary school. The reasoning behind the policy is to build a solid education foundation for children. Generally, early childhood education had been the exclusive preserve of private investors, many of whom saw it as a business opportunity or investment rather than an important service to the society. Only the children of the rich

and privileged were able to afford early childhood education in the past. In most instances, such schools, known as Nursery schools, were found only in large cities and towns. The rural areas, which have the largest population in the country and where the people are less economically buoyant, did not have access to early childhood education. With the new policy and government drive to make early childhood education more accessible and available to all, it is believed that the out of school phenomenon will be tackled. Early childhood education is aimed at children who may not yet be of much economic assistance to their parents through child labour. Consequently, there may not be much opposition by parents to their education. The expectation is that once children have been exposed early to education it would be unlikely for their parents to withdraw them from continuing with their primary education. Though still in its infant stages, the early childhood initiative is an encouraging step in the right direction.

The research equally found that Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), traditional institutions and religious promoted the implementation of the MDG 2 especially in relation to school enrolment. By promoting awareness campaigns in their communities, they were able to influence parents to send their children to school. The traditional institutions in particular have been asserting their authority in their constituency to ensure that parents send their children to schools. It may be important to note that in many parts of Nigeria especially in the northern and southwestern zones, traditional institutions are strong and people look up to the occupants of these offices for guidance and direction. Harnessing the resources commanded by these offices and institutions has been beneficial to increased enrolment in primary schools under the MDG programmes. Invigorating these institutions towards lending their powerful voices to educating, sensitizing and encouraging their constituents to embrace government's efforts and initiatives of free and compulsory education would go a long way to achieving universal education for children in Nigeria especially at the primary school level. To do this, many have recommended a more explicit constitutional recognition and roles for the traditional institutions in Nigeria.

Although participants spoke to some of the interventions by the federal government towards meeting the MDG 2 as outlined in

Table 5

Key Policies, Programmes and Projects aimed at Promoting Education

, there were other initiatives such as the federal teachers scheme, Almajiri education program, the national framework for girls and women, technology and information policy, the national education quality assurance policy etc that were not mentioned. The national education quality assurance policy for instance highlights a well defined national quality assurance system below the tertiary level, with expectations on the standard expected in Nigeria's education sector (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014). The policy boldly addresses the challenges that have for long hindered effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning process in Nigerian schools and feedback mechanisms for enhancing the quality of education provision. This policy initiative was not mentioned by any research participant further highlighting the lack of awareness. While the policy speaks to effective monitoring which is crucial for universal primary education, the identification of poor monitoring and supervision by some participants as a constraint to the implementation of MDG 2 raises questions as to the impact of the policy in reality. All these initiatives hold great promise towards meeting the MDG 2 if fully implemented as described in the MDGs End-point report. Despite signifying hope, the failure of research participants to mention them could be lack of awareness on their part. It could also be that the government did not involve them in the design of the initiatives, therefore making it difficult for them to know about them. This aligns with researchers' position that target groups are sometimes treated as onlookers rather than participants, and are rarely involved in policy design or implementation (Bolaji, Gray, & Campbell-Evans, 2015).

There is hardly any doubt that Nigeria did not achieve the goal of universal primary education for all children within the ambit of the MDGs. However, it must be admitted that a lot has been achieved and more importantly the country appears to be marching in the right direction towards drastically reducing the number of out of school children and even hopefully eliminating it in the near future. Entrenching the current achievements in the country would definitely ensure success.

Equally important is to acknowledge the fact that there are still many challenges to be tackled despite the much that has been achieved. These are summarized under 'constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal education' in the next subsection.

Constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal primary education

There is no doubt that the UBE as a major driver of the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education significantly contributed to school enrolment. However, the intent of the UBE, which is the creation of an enabling environment for the provision of free and compulsory education is not a complete reflection of its objectives in practice. The study indicated that some schools despite

being tuition free still charge fees for other things like PTA, books and sports. In a country with almost 50% of its people living in extreme poverty i.e. 87 million (Brookings Institution, 2018), any fee is enough to discourage parents from enrolling their children.

The study also found that instructional materials and infrastructural facilities where available, are inadequate, while other schools are in dire need of both. The resulting overcrowding and pressure on the few educational materials available does not provide a conducive environment for learning.

The absence of a mechanism to ensure that beneficiaries of in-service teacher training return to the classroom at the end of their training emerged as a constraint to the implementation of the MDG 2. Furthermore, the abolition of teachers' training colleges in Nigeria resulted in a situation whereby several teachers in primary schools are not actually qualify to teach. The study found that the recruitment of teachers who have no passion for teaching leave children as the ultimate victims. Teachers' training colleges help with preparation of teachers for the task of teaching and mentoring of pupils. Its abolition leave primary schools exposed to teachers some of whom do not understand the principles and practice of education. It is therefore not enough to bring graduates of any discipline to teach just to keep them employed.

The study indicates that the MDG's excessive emphasis on enrolment without commensurate focus on quality has the potential to ultimately undermine the intent to raise the level of education of children in Nigeria the country. The research found that when enrolment and the quality of education delivered are of the best standard, the country stands to gain. When the government promotes enrolment without recruiting qualified teachers, it automatically sets up its children for failure as the children will be unable to compete with their peers from other places. This is important as qualified teachers are necessary to give solid foundation to pupils in primary schools. The findings show that shortage of qualified teachers results in a situation whereby the available ones are over worked such that the teacher-pupils ratio of 1:35 as outlined in the National Policy on Education is violated with ratios ranging from 1:60 to 1:80 or more. In simple terms, the number of teachers is not commensurate with the number of pupils, which leaves the former overwhelmed. The neglect of due process in the appointment of teachers lead to the influx unqualified teachers into the classroom thereby compromising the quality of education.

The study found that the priority attached to the welfare of teachers is low, as evident in the perpetual lateness or non-payment of teachers' salaries by some state governments. This practice weakens the motivation of teachers some of whom prefer to leave public schools for private ones (schools) where they are guaranteed timely payment of salaries. There are several implications for nonpayment of teachers' salaries, including the effects on their ability to support their families and motivation to teach pupils. The study also shows that at retirement, some teachers are subjected to

major delays in the payment of their gratuity and pensions while others are not paid at all. This practice sends wrong messages to teachers currently in employment thereby discouraging them from investing quality time, energy and effort into their job. This is based on the perception that their future survival after retirement might not be guaranteed despite their service and dedication to the teaching profession. The study found that the teaching profession in Nigeria has been relegated to the background. The enormity of the problem was highlighted by the fact that many qualified teachers in primary schools are paid a monthly salary equivalent to US\$28 only.

The research found several issues with inspection and supervision of schools and teachers. For instance, inspectors are not well motivated to do their work. As a result, they compromise on several things such as not reporting professional misconducts or violations they found during inspection. Examples of such violations include questionable absence of teachers from schools or incidence of ghost workers or child labour perpetrated by teachers. In many instances, inspectors do not even bother to make the rounds of schools to ensure that all is well with the schools.

The prevalence of ghost workers in some schools posed an important challenge to the implementation of the MDG 2. Ghost workers named on the payroll give the impression that there are adequate number of teachers in schools when in reality they are not. Ghost workers are usually fictitious names on government payrolls used by corrupt officials including school heads to siphon government funds (Kirya, 2019). This practice also contributes to high enrolment and shortage of teachers. This gross loss of valuable and limited resources earmarked for educational purposes to corrupt officials is a significant impediment to achieving the MDG 2. The resources that should have been invested in providing teaching/learning materials, infrastructure and recruitment and training of teachers end up in the pockets of only a few people. The ghost workers' syndrome is widely common in Nigeria at all levels and is an evidence of the serious breaches of ethics, professionalism, and patriotism in the public service (Idoko, 2017).

The inefficient management of public primary schools posed a challenge to the implementation of the MDG 2. There are too many agencies all laying supervisory claim to primary education and this causes confusion. These agencies include the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), the National Commission for Mass Education, the state ministries of Education, and the National Commission for Nomadic Education. There are several implications associated with this confusion such as the inability to effectively conduct monitoring or supervision of schools and teachers. Participants noted that sometimes information provided by inspectors are never acted upon leaving them to wonder if anyone ever deals with the feedback from inspection exercises.

The study shows that stakeholders at the grassroots were either insufficient or never consulted on important educational policy matters. The top-down approach to educational policy decision-making leaves little room for the opinions of school administrators and teachers on the actual impact of government policies in the classroom. Consequently, instead of ideas filtering up the ladder from the grassroots, the government imposes policies that are sometimes at variance with the reality on ground. This makes it difficult for such policies to be fully and effectively implemented.

Poverty featured as a major socioeconomic factor that affected the implementation of the MDG 2. Poverty affected the ability of some parents to enrol their children as they would rather have them support the family by engaging them in economic activities such as street hawking. With Nigeria becoming the country with the highest incidents of extreme poverty in the world (Adebayo, 2018; Brooking Institutions, 2018), there is more work to do to encourage parents to enrol their children in school.

Insecurity and armed conflicts featured in the study as important constraints to the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. Kidnapping for ransom emerged as a major form of insecurity across the six geopolitical zones, with unpleasant consequences on primary education as well as foreign investment in Nigeria. At the time of this research, there was no clear solution to the problem. The study identified the kinds of armed conflict to include the one inspired by the Boko Haram terrorist organization that has held the Northeast hostage, and the herdsmen conflict in parts of the Northwest, and north central. The third kind of conflict, which is prevalent in the Southsouth is from the activities of cultists. These conflicts especially by Boko Haram has led to the death and displacement of several thousands of Nigerians including children and their parents as well as their teachers and destruction of schools. The study also found that the group is notorious for its use of girls as weapons of war. Now in its tenth year, the study suggest that it is increasingly becoming obvious that Nigeria has no capacity to win the war against the terrorists. The atmosphere of fear that these conflicts have generated in the country has made school enrolment and retention of students in schools very problematic in some parts of the country. Many children of school age and others who until they were displaced were in schools, now live in IDP camps where their educational needs are not being effectively catered for.

The research found early marriage as a sociocultural barrier to the implementation of the MDG 2. The practice featured mostly in Northern Nigeria for three reasons. For cultural or religious reasons, some parents prefer to marry off their daughter early so that they do not succumb to immorality. Other parents subscribe to early marriage for economic reasons to address the challenge of poverty. Early marriage also became an option for parents to marry off their daughters rather than risk sending them to school and be kidnapped by Boko Haram. Another sociocultural constraint is the Almajiri syndrome

whereby school age children roam the streets begging for alms rather than enrolled in school. This practice which is prevalent in the three northern zones makes the vulnerable children to become easy recruits for terrorism and all kinds of crime.

Research contribution

The study makes a contribution to knowledge in the area of practice by being the first to comprehensively evaluate the MDG on universal primary education in Nigeria. It is therefore a source of data and literature for researchers, policy makers and the general public on the successes and challenges of achieving the MDG 2. The findings of the study may also inform policy on universal primary education in Nigeria especially as the SDGs take effect with similar hopes and aspirations as the MDGs. It is noteworthy that SDG 4 aligns with MDG 2 and the challenges determined by this study may help in developing strategies to ensure the success of SGD 4 and universal education in Nigeria in general.

The research design, data collection and analysis have furthered research methodology in the field of studying universal education in Nigeria. This research design could be adopted and adapted for research studies in other regions and countries with similar challenges as Nigeria. The research findings contribute to better understanding of the issues that facilitate and militate against enrolments in primary schools and in achieving universal basic education, especially in developing countries such as Nigeria.

Recommendations

These recommendations are presented based on the findings, analysis, and conclusion of this study, with implication for attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals 4 (which succeeded the MDG 2 in 2015). The recommendations highlighted below are for: (a) the Nigerian government, (b) parents, (c) public primary school administrators and teachers, and (d) traditional and religious institutions:

Recommendation #1: It is recommended that clarity in the roles of the various agencies of government as it relates to the management of primary education in Nigeria is essential. The presence of several agencies currently looks like an attempt to get everyone employed as leaders in the primary education sector. The confusion arising from this often leaves important primary education matters unaddressed, thereby requiring a need for better coordination.

Recommendation #2: The research suggests that the current top-down approach to educational decision making be re-visited by government at all levels. These include the federal, state, and local levels to incorporate a bottom-up approach that considers the voice of those at the grassroots. The imposition of a policy on people without their input has the tendency to backfire.

Recommendation #3: The research also suggest that the Nigerian government become committed to matching statements with action. This is because the universal primary education which in principle is free, is not completely free in practice in some public schools across the country. It is important that all manner of costs that could hinder access to education be removed, while the government show more commitment to funding of education. It is recommended that the federal government initiate partnerships with leading private sector organizations in Nigeria such as banks, the oil and gas industry, telecommunication firms and others to support the funding of education through the building of libraries, sports complexes, play grounds, classrooms, learning materials and others. Influential and wealthy parents are also encouraged to voluntarily donate similar facilities to schools.

Recommendation #4: The research recommends declaration of a state of emergency on unqualified teachers in Nigerian classrooms by the federal ministry of education. Investing large amounts of resources in infrastructure in primary education while teaching is delivered by unqualified teachers is an exercise in futility. There are several implications of leaving such teachers in the classroom as the pupils they teach and supervise are put at a disadvantaged position and unable to compete with their contemporaries. It is important that the federal government consider re-visiting the abolition of teachers training colleges, given that only those who were passionate and really interested in the teaching profession attended such institutions in the past. Admitting students from such colleges directly into faculties of education in Nigerian universities has the potential to address poor quality of teachers in primary schools. The establishment of a committee by the federal ministry of education to involve stakeholders such as teachers, policy makers, school administrators, parents, and others, to re-visit this is important.

Recommendation #5: More investment in the training of teachers at the primary school level by the federal, state, and local governments is recommended. Such training could be to pursue higher teaching qualifications or regular professional days built into the schools academic calendar. Training of teachers will equip them to deliver high quality education. This is because the MDG 2 resulted in high enrolment in primary schools because of the emphasis placed on it without commensurate level of emphasis on the quality of instruction. It is also important to prioritize the welfare of teachers by addressing irregular or nonpayment of salaries and provision of other incentives. It is recommended that state governments fix a date when monthly salaries are expected to be paid. That will help teachers to plan. This is because salaries for instance, is an important promoter of teacher motivation (Rakum & Boh, 2019).

Recommendation #6: The research recommends that school administrators and teachers reciprocate the in-service training of teachers by contributing to teaching and learning at the end of their training. Investment in infrastructure by the government is necessary as overcrowded classrooms, which are a feature of most public primary schools in Nigeria, is also a discouraging

factor as parents often feel that the safety of their children in such environment is not guaranteed.

Recommendation #7: A re-orientation in the largely Islamic zones mostly in Northern Nigeria is important to abolish or at least remodel the Almajiri system to meet contemporary standard of education. The research indicates that Nigeria will gain from seeing the children in this system as opportunities waiting to be harnessed. This is important as it will minimize the risk of becoming easy prey and victims to unscrupulous people in the society, such as the adherents of the Boko Haram terrorist group. The elite in northern Nigeria need to inspire the next generation and become part of the solution to the Almajiri system, to demonstrate that children of northern Nigeria can attain any height in life with good education. One of such elite that the Almajiri children can look up to as an inspiration is the current deputy secretary general of the United Nations Mrs Amina Mohammed who hails from the northeast of Nigeria. That Almajiri is still an issue almost 60 years after Nigeria attained political independence calls for urgent action. This is because northerners had either been Prime minister, President, or Head of State ten out of seventeen administrations in the country and all had the opportunity to have addressed the problem. The elite of northern Nigeria all over the world without necessarily looking up to the Nigerian government, can consider starting a campaign with a specific focus on Almajiri children with the aim of changing their orientation, educating and creating vocational training and job opportunities for them.

Recommendation #8: A re-orientation in the Southeast by state governments in the region is necessary to close the gap in enrolment and encourage parents to send their male children to school. It is suggested that such orientation include parents who exert excessive pressure on their children to go in search of quick monetary rewards rather than receive primary education. The government has a responsibility to improve the standard of living of its people as this is a factor driving many parents to either send their children to the farm or streets to earn a living or going into business rather than school or even into early marriage. In this respect, government has a responsibility to create jobs. Commitment by the government in addressing mismanagement and exterminating corruption, will make a positive difference.

Recommendation #9: The research suggests that the improvement of the quality of education is necessarily tied to the political, economic and social climate of Nigeria. The insecurity created by the herdsman-farmers conflict, Boko Haram, and cultist activities pose an important challenge to schooling. The prevalence of the Boko Haram for instance, especially in the northeast, will be a major deterrent for the stability of education and the safety of children. Given that the insecurity caused by Boko Haram is now in its eleventh year, it is recommended that the federal government responsible for overall security within the Nigerian state consider a change in its tactics. Such tactics could include capacity building in the form of training, re-training, and provision of appropriate and adequate military equipments for the Nigerian military to withstand a conflict of this

nature, which is apparently alien to the institution given the thousands of deaths of civilian and military personnel in the past eleven years. Others include engaging stakeholders in the northeast such as traditional and religious leaders, as well as former Boko Haram repentant terrorists towards finding a solution. It is also recommended that the federal government continue to work with the international community towards finding a lasting solution. This is because what has become apparent in the past eleven years despite assurances by the Nigerian military is that this conflict cannot be contained by Nigeria alone.

Recommendation #10: The research therefore suggests that the Nigerian government consider addressing these more troublesome factors that are beyond the purview of education, but necessarily impede on the ability of the government to provide stable education across the country. This is because education emerged from this research as the one important weapon that can defeat terrorism. It is therefore important that Nigerians cooperate with the government in finding a solution to the current state of insecurity.

Recommendation #11: It is also suggested that school administrators, parent teacher associations in all public schools in Nigeria, as well as the federal ministry of education considers promoting the culture of alumni who eventually become privileged later in life to give back to their former school communities. While this is already a practice in some schools, a national advocacy will encourage more schools and their former students to start considering it. This can start with the introduction of yearbooks especially in public primary school, as it can help children to stay in touch several years after school.

Conclusion

This study has been able to identify and speak to the supports and constraints that shaped Nigeria's capacity to meet the millennium development goal #2 on universal primary education. The findings suggest that local interventions such as the universal basic education policy and the home-grown school feeding program were important drivers of the implementation of the MDG 2 by facilitating enrolment. The school feeding initiative for instance is an important intervention that can reduce undernutrition, while maximizing developmental and educational potential and attainment among school age children (Kristjansson, Gelli, Welch, & Espejo, 2017; Soares, Davo-Blanes, & Cavalli, 2017). It also contributes to meeting the sustainable development goal (SDG) aimed at ending hunger and achieving food security (SDG 2); ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all (SDG 3), and ensuring inclusive and quality education for all (SDG 4) (United Nations, 2015). Other drivers that promoted the implementation of MDG 2 include the national gender policy on basic education, and the early childhood education policy. However, with an estimated 10.5 million out of school children, Nigeria has a long way to go.

The constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2 range from lack of coordination among the various agencies of government, inadequacy of instructional materials and infrastructural facilities, insecurity and armed conflict, and poverty, ghost worker syndrome, shortage of qualified teachers, poor welfare of teachers, inadequacy of training, poverty, Almajiri system, child labour, and early marriage. There is still hope, but the country must act now if it intends to close the gaps in the implementation of the MDG 2 in order to meet the SDG 4 on education by 2030. With a large youthful population, primary education is of great importance to Nigeria. This is because in the longer term, Nigeria needs to reduce its reliance on crude oil given the volatility of commodity prices. Its human resources need to be well educated and the government needs to promote equal opportunity. An educated workforce enjoying equal opportunity is a great asset, able to release potentials that could make Nigeria a reference point and a success story in the comity of nations.

Limitations of the study

Given the relationship between poverty and education as gathered from this study, it would have been good to examine the impact of poverty alleviation initiatives of the government from the perspective of the beneficiaries in the six zones. The financial implications of such study made it not feasible.

Even though this is among the first studies to evaluate the implementation of the MDG 2 in Nigeria from the perspective of school administrators, an interesting dimension would have been added to the research had parents of in-school and out of school children been interviewed as well as teachers. The duration of the PhD, funding, and access to such participants within the time of the study made it difficult.

The gravity of the impact of Boko Haram and other armed conflicts on schooling in Nigeria's northeast and other northern regions is so much that a face to face meeting with parents of some of the kidnapped school girls, as well as some of the girls released from Boko Haram captivity would have been a great contribution to the work. The safety risk and the possibility of adding to the trauma of such parents and their children made it a difficult proposition.

This study would have further been enriched by a longitudinal study of an expanded study area (to all the 36 states of Nigeria and their respective local government areas and communities), which may have allowed for the study of a more complete kaleidoscope of opinions and perceptions to make comparative analysis among communities in relation to the drivers and constraints to the implementation of the MDG 2. Such extensive study will help to understand their perspectives on some of the issues at the micro level better.

Final Reflection

Embarking on a qualitative case study with a focus on Nigeria initially appear intimidating for several reasons: its population of nearly 200 million people, the multicultural nature of the country with over 300 ethnic groups, accessibility of study participants, and lots more. However, as I continued with my doctoral courses, my research skill was enhanced, resulting in my fears giving way to courage.

The research participants demonstrated a high sense of awareness of universal primary education and the role of the millennium development goal. Their awareness encouraged the researcher to probe further to gain an understanding of the role of local policy initiatives in the implementation of the MDG 2 on universal primary education. These participants and their stories created new information that enriched the research. The passion and authority behind their stories raise questions as to what would have been the fate of school age children in the absence of MDG 2. The comprehensive picture of the entire findings of the research and its implications, especially the realization that Nigeria still have over 10.5 million out of school children after the 15 years of the MDGs, raises more questions and if at all there is still hope.

The answer lies in the stories of the participants who believe that if the barriers to the implementation of the MDG 2 they highlighted were addressed, Nigeria could still make it. While many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the role the government on several issues especially the endemic conflict in the Northern part of the country, their grievance did not necessarily define them. The expression of their feelings made their stories much richer thereby making for a robust set of data. The enormous amount of data received from this study is impressive. The fact that research participants were willing to talk, and the trust they had in the researcher by baring their minds points to two things. First, that the topic meant so much to Nigeria's collective future since it concerns the education of children. Second, the research preparation and supervisory guidance at the University of Calgary are important given that they prepared the researcher to excel in the field.

The participants had a deep understanding of their world. They had sound understanding of the past, present, and where they see the future of universal primary education. While appreciating the intervention of local policy initiatives in the implementation of the MDG 2, they do not forget the initiatives that advanced quality education in the past and were emphatic in presenting their points.

The school administrators were gracious in some of the challenges they faced. To some of them, being an educationist was their calling and they would rather speak up to ensure that change is implemented rather than quit. The passion they demonstrated served as a reminder that being an educationist goes beyond salaries and benefits. It is a way of life. It requires sacrifice. It is that passion that translates to a good learning experience for children. Stories about the absence of school toilets and how students and teachers have to go into the bush when in need of toilet raises more questions

as to why such problem still exist in the 21st century.

The administrators that remained in the conflict zone despite stories of kidnapping and violence appears like the heroes. They were concerned about the role of conflict as a barrier to universal primary education but did not give up. While some of their colleagues were forced by the conflict to flee, some of them chose to remain with the children. They consider the children to be theirs. They believe in the future of the children and therefore decided to stay. They recognized that a lot of sacrifices comes with their chosen profession. The researcher set out to conduct a doctoral study but returned with research data as well as life lessons, which serves as a reminder that being an educational researcher requires exceptional passion and commitment to the profession. An important take away from the research is that for Nigeria everyone has a responsibility towards removing constraints to the implementation of universal primary education: government, politicians, teachers, school administrators, parents, traditional and religious institutions, and the Nigerian society. Most of the responsibilities lies with the government, who can only succeed with the support of all.

The findings of the study suggest a necessary change of attitude towards universal primary education at all levels, because 10.5 million out of school children is more than the population of some countries. The researcher has responsibilities too. First by completing this study, second by publishing/disseminating the findings through reputable outlets, and many other ways. The study presented life lessons that will forever be treasured and cherished.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Sample of Interview Questions



1. Please tell me about your understanding of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal primary education.
2. How were you informed about the MDG on universal primary education?
3. What impact would you say the MDG had on primary school enrolment?
4. How did you create awareness about school enrolment?
5. Please tell me about the response you got from parents of children of school age.
6. Was there any educational authority tracking the progress of the MDG in your school?
7. Was there any type of support your school received towards implementation of the MDG on universal primary education?
8. What are the benefits of the MDG on universal primary education to your school?
9. What are the problems/challenges you encountered with this MDG in your school?
10. Would you say the program was a success or a failure? Please tell me why you think so.
11. Do you think everything is accurate or something is missing or something should have been done differently?
12. Please is there any other issue(s) you would like me to know?

Appendix B - Letter of invitation to participate in research



Date.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

Invitation to Participate in Research: Evaluation of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal primary education in Nigeria

My name is Rachael Edino, a PhD student at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

I am inviting you to participate in a study regarding the evaluation of Nigeria's implementation of the Millennium Development Goal on universal primary education. This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

You have been identified as being an important educational stakeholder in providing your understanding or experience of the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education. As an educational stakeholder, your participation will play a vital role in examining the extent to which local policy initiatives supported or constrained Nigeria's capacity to meet the MDG on universal primary education. This project looks at the drivers or constraints associated with the implementation of the MDG #2 on universal primary education in Nigeria, and will inform policy recommendations that could help Nigeria to achieve/consolidate on the desired output of the MDG on universal primary education. Any information and data you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The interview will be audiotaped for transcription purposes.

This is a self-funded study and I am personally recruiting you to participate in this research. This research is not Government-sponsored. Your recruitment is not through the Ministry of Education or any other authority/agency. Data provided will only be accessible to the researcher (myself) and my supervisory team. Data will not be shared with the Ministry of Education or any other body/agency. Your responses will be confidential and reported in aggregate, and all information offered in the study will be kept in the strictest confidence by the researchers.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you would be asked to:

- Participate in a semi-structured telephone or WhatsApp interview, of about one to two hours. Your privacy and confidentiality will be respected and preserved at all times throughout the research process;
- Answer questions regarding your experience as it relates to the implementation of the MDG on universal primary education in Nigeria; what you see as the gaps, successes, and weaknesses that Nigeria could improve upon now that the 15 years of the MDG have come and gone.
- Provide feedback on the data from your interview.

If you are interested in participating, or in finding out more about the study, please contact the researcher (Rachael Edino) or her supervisor Dr. Dianne Gereluk, at the address below. We will respond promptly with a summary of the project, and a consent form.

Thank you

Rachael Edino, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
Dr. Dianne Gereluk, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

We would be privileged to share your experience as it relate to universal primary education in Nigeria as outlined in the MDG. Thank you!

Appendix C - Consent form



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Rachael Edino, Werklund School of Education

Supervisor:

Dr. Dianne Gereluk, Werklund School of Education

Title of Project:

Evaluation of the Millennium Development Goal on Universal Primary Education in Nigeria

Sponsor:

Self

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study. Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influences of local policy initiatives on Nigeria's capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goal #2 on universal primary education.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in a telephone or WhatsApp interview, which will last for between 1 – 2 hours with intermittent breaks.

Interviews will be audiotaped at the approval of the participant to help capture research data, save time, and minimize loss of information.

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate altogether, refuse to participate in parts of the study, decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study.

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, education, and institutional role.

The audiotaped interview will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisory committee. The recording will not be shared publicly. Data will not be shared with the Ministry of Education.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I grant permission to be audio-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I give my oral consent to participate in this study: Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to have my school's name used: Yes: ___ No: ___

You may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research. This is a self-funded study and I personally recruited you to participate in this research. This research is not Government-sponsored. Your recruitment was not done through the Ministry of Education or any other authority/agency. Data provided will only be accessible to the researcher (myself) and my supervisory team. Data will not be shared publicly or with the Ministry of Education or any other body. Your responses will be confidential and reported in aggregate, and all information offered in the study will be kept in the strictest confidence by the researchers.

This research offers no paid compensation for participation, and you will incur no cost to participate in the interview or transcription validation. The benefit of participating in this study will be that you and the Nigerian Primary Education System will have access to important new, updated knowledge from this study about the extent to which local policy initiatives supported or constrained Nigeria's capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal primary education, as well as the gaps, successes, and weaknesses that Nigeria could improve upon now that the 15 years of the MDG have come and gone.

Your position of employment or position will not be affected by your decision to participate or decline.

You will not incur any bill for participation or non-participation, and there are no anticipated risks for participation or non-participation.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The information collected from you will be assigned to a pseudonym. No one will ever know your name or the name of your institution, and your name will not be kept in the research data records. Only the researcher and her supervisory committee will know your name and that will never translate to the research data records; the information you provide will be kept confidential. The data will be kept in locked filing cabinets and on highly secure encrypted University of Calgary Computers in locked, secure states. Data collected from this study will be stored for five years at which time, it will be permanently erased. Only the researcher Rachael Edino and her supervisor Dr. Dianne Gereluk, and other members of the supervisory committee Dr. Amy Burns and Dr. Sarah Eaton have access to your data. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of all data from this study. By reporting aggregate data associated with a pseudonym your identity will not be known.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, all the data contributed will be destroyed if your request is received prior to analysis. Data withdrawal is possible up to the point of data analysis.

If you would like to receive a summary of the study's result, please contact me using the information provided at the bottom of this page.

Are you interested in being contacted about a follow-up interview (if required), with the understanding that you can always decline the request?" Yes: ___ No: ___

Oral Consent

Your oral consent indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Rachael Ileh Edino, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
and Dr. Dianne Gereluk, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-6289/220-4283; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.