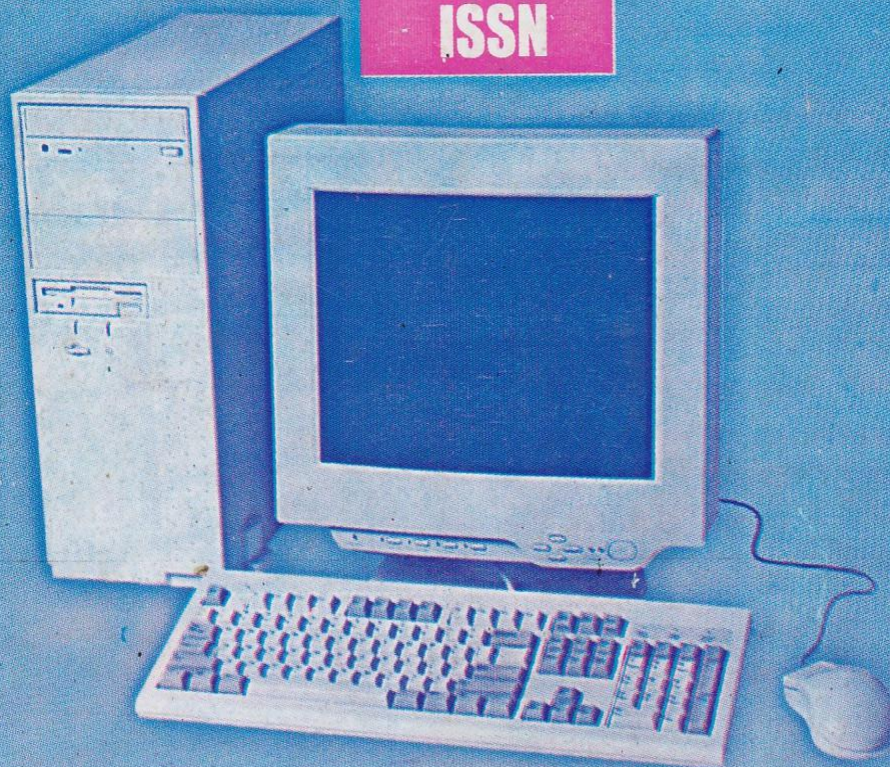


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PRIMARY EDUCATION IN AKWA IBOM STATE: IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The study examined the perception of stakeholders on the implementation problems and prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. The population comprised two groups of respondents: 1112 heads of primary schools and 148 staff of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Akwa Ibom State. The study had a sample of 235 respondents: 155 headteachers and 80 SUBEB staff. The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level, using t-test analysis. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire. The two null hypotheses were retained, indicating no significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups of respondents regarding implementation problems and prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. Based on this, it was concluded that primary education in Akwa Ibom State is faced with a number of implementation problems including insufficient teachers, poor school libraries, poor teacher motivation, and poor funding. It was recommended, among other things, that adequate attention should be given to the implementation of primary education in the State.

Introduction

Primary Education, a component of Nigerian Basic Education programme, is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus (NPE, 2004). It is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system as the rest of the education system is built upon it. By implication, successful implementation of primary education guarantees the success of the entire education system.

However, the implementation of primary education programme in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria generally has not been devoid of problems. A number of factors pose serious obstacles to the successful implementation of this programme at both the state and federal levels. This paper examines the perception of stakeholders on the implementation problems and prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Goals of Primary Education

Being an integral part of basic education, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004:14) sets out the goals of primary education as:

- Inculcating permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
- Laying a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- Giving citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- Moulding the character and developing of sound attitude and morals in the child;

- Developing in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; and
- Providing the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

In pursuance of these goals, the National Policy sets out the implementation strategies to include:

- Provision of basic educational services such as school library.
- Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into primary education.
- The provision of basic infrastructure and training for the realization of the goals of primary education (NPE, 2004 p.15).

Implementation of Primary Education in Akwa Ibom State

Although government is making efforts to successfully implement primary education programme in the state, several areas are yet to receive adequate attention. Primary education in Akwa Ibom State seems to suffer from dearth of qualified teachers, poor educational services such as school library, basic health scheme, counseling, education resource center and dearth of specialist teachers in major areas. Besides, the teacher-pupil ratio in most primary schools is very high, ICT is an unknown concept among the teachers and pupils of most primary schools, and basic infrastructure are yet to be adequately provided.

The role of school libraries in the attainment of educational excellence is yet to be fully appreciated by most Nigerians. The Akwa Ibom State government is also culpable in this regard, having paid only lip service over the years to the establishment of libraries in schools. The Federal government acknowledged the importance of school libraries as far back as 1981, when it stated, in its National Policy on Education (Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education 1981), that: Libraries are one of the most important education services, but not much has been done in this direction till date. Every state ministry of education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our educational institutions and to train librarians and Library Assistants for this service.

A nationwide study carried out by Ayeni and Oyebanji (1997), revealed that school libraries in Nigeria were still mostly non-functional due to neglect and inadequate funding. In most states of the country, school library services were very inadequate because there were no financial allocations made for school libraries even though financial allocations were being made to schools. The poor state of school library services creates a problem for the effective implementation of primary education programme. Most schools are reported to lack libraries, the few that are available are poorly funded, lack adequate collections and are poorly staffed. Since the implementation guidelines of primary education noted the need for infrastructures and facilities including school libraries, to be provided to appropriate standards, it becomes imperative that school libraries be looked into and revamped with utmost seriousness with a view to ensuring the successful implementation of primary education in the state.

No educational system can afford to stay outside the knowledge age in a world that is now run by knowledge. The way out of this dilemma is the integration of computer awareness, computer appreciation, computer literacy and computer applications into the primary education programme. Already there is a national policy on computer education in Nigeria (Abimbade, 1998). However, a survey conducted to determine the extent of teachers' awareness of this policy revealed that many were not aware of it and a large number of schools do not have microcomputers or teachers qualified

Primary Education in Akwa Ibom State: Implementation Problems and Prospects

to teach computer studies. So far, computer usage is limited to a few secondary schools such as federal government colleges, few state government colleges and a few private secondary schools. This is not a surprise, because the Nigerian government has been generally lukewarm towards the development of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in schools (Iromantu, 1998).

At the inception of the UBE programme in 1999, it was realized that such basic school level infrastructure as classrooms, stores, offices and toilets were not only in short supply, but also the available ones had deteriorated. For example, the results of the UBE Rapid Response Data (UBE, 2000) showed that out of a total of 332,498 classrooms in the 44,292 primary schools in the country, only 140,134 classrooms were in good condition, while the remaining 192,364 required massive rehabilitation. A total of 285,920 additional classrooms were required to accommodate 511,939 streams of different classes.

Infrastructural facilities are important in the teaching learning situations and have resultant effects on academic performance of the students. They also contribute to the enhancement of teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Akomolafe, 2001). School Physical facilities are perceived as part of the tools designed to facilitate and stimulate educational programmes. It has been argued by Adesina (1990) that the quality and quantity of the educational facilities available within an educational system have positive relationship with the standard and quality of that educational system.

Since school physical facilities are very important in teaching and learning, it is obvious that a good school premises could have significant educational effect on pupils. Durosaro in Akomolafe (2001) found out in his investigation that schools that are well planned and maintained have higher students retention and are even more effective than others. It was also found out that schools that were adequately provided with facilities scored higher in their performance in West African Examinations Council subjects and in their rate of utilization of instructional facilities. In his study, Taiwo (1986) found that lack of equipment, textbooks and materials on the part of pupils, mostly from low socio-economic background contributed to the fall in the standard of primary education in Western Nigeria. Availability of teachers, in sufficient number and with the relevant qualifications and motivation, has been among the sore points of primary education in Nigeria. At the inception of the UBE programme in 1999, a total of 429,048 teachers were available for 20,698,546 children expected to benefit from UBE at the primary level. That gave an average national teacher/pupil ratio of 1:48. However, for the universally accepted ratio of 1:40, 772,338 additional teachers were required for the successful take-off of UBE (UBE, 2000). Geographical disparities made the matter worse because some states had pupil/teacher ratios as high as one teacher to about 70 pupils or more.

The teacher, according to McNeil and Popham (2003), is a person engaged in interactive behaviour with one or more pupils for the purpose of effecting a change in those pupils. Thus the teacher has a crucial role to play in the educational system. The teacher, according to Afe (1995), could be a blessing or a curse depending on his level of effectiveness and job success as a result of how he teaches and helps others to learn better. In the educational system generally and primary education specifically, the primary school teacher is a major resource base. The teacher is an invaluable resource in the school system especially the UBE programme. This was acknowledged by Souper (1976) when he pointed out that because the experience of failure and frustration is inescapable in the teaching situation, it is essential that the teacher's value and belief systems are not only well, and reasonably founded, but also well developed.

Finance is a key resource required by every organization for effective performance. The financing of education in Nigeria has been accomplished through: school fees; grant-in-aid from the various governments; and levies by cultural unions and various forms of voluntary contributions by

parents and guardians (Adesua, 1981). Igwe (1990) reports of three traditional sources of income for education services to include the public authorities; users of education; and self-generated income. It should be noted that though education receives the largest share of annual budgets, it still remains inadequately funded because of large numbers and high cost of equipment (Mbipom, 2000).

In recognition of the enormous problem of inadequacy of educational funding in most States of the federation, the Federal government promulgated the National Primary Education Commission Decree 31 (1988). The Decree established the National Primary Education Fund which should be deducted directly from the Federal Government's share of the Federation Accounts. This was a major step forward in the financing of primary education in the country. The fund was to consist of the Federal Government's 65% contribution to the calculated cost of primary school teachers' and non-teachers' salaries. The balance of 35% to be raised is to be contributed on the basis of "demographical criteria for estimating the number of children of primary school age, and an educational planning, including the criterion of forty pupils per teacher in a class." Also, the fund was to be disbursed as follows: 20% to all educationally disadvantaged States; and 80% to all the States of the Federation and the Federal Territory as follows:

- (a) 50% on the basis of equality of States; and
- (b) 50% on the basis of population.

A UBE legislation, signed by President Obasanjo on May 27, 2004, provides for funding of primary education from three sources: (1) block grants, in the form of proposed federal matching contributions to state financing of primary education, from the federal government of not less than two per cent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund; (2) funds or contributions in the form of federal guaranteed credits and loans; (3) international donor grants. For any state to qualify for UBE grant, it must contribute not less than fifty per cent of its total cost of projects funds as cost-share.

As observed by Ala-Adeyemi and Afolabi (1990), the managers of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria are in consensus that these institutions are grossly under-funded. Evidence exists on the degree of dilapidation that characterizes the primary and secondary school buildings in parts of the country; non-payment of teachers salaries and allowances as a result of which strikes are the order of the day; lack of necessary teaching and learning materials at all levels of the educational system; poor working conditions of all teachers in the country, among other indices. It has also been argued that financial mismanagement and lack of accountability by officials led to diverting substantial resources from the educational institutions to other ends.

Purpose of the Study

The study was carried out to examine the perception of stakeholders on the implementation problems and prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the perception of head teachers and SUBEB Staff on the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State;
2. determine the perception of head teachers and SUBEB Staff on the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff of the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff of the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study.

1. There is no significant difference between the perception of head teachers and SUBEB Staff on the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.
2. There is no significant difference between the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff on the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

Population

The study population comprised two groups of respondents: heads of primary schools and staff of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in Akwa Ibom State, totaling 1260 (1112 headteachers and 148 SUBEB staff).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study had a sample of 235 respondents: 155 headteachers and 80 SUBEB staff sampled across the three senatorial districts of the State. In both cases, the simple random sampling technique was used for the selection.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire tagged "Implementation of Primary Education Questionnaire" (IPEQ) was developed and used in the study. It was duly validated and a trial test conducted and analysed to determine the reliability level of the instrument. This stood at 0.67 and 0.69 respectively for the two categories of respondents.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected were analysed using percentages for research questions and t-test for the hypotheses.

Research Question 1

What is the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff of the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1
Weighted Means and Ranking of the Perception of Primary Education Implementation Problems by Headteachers and SUBEB Staff

S/N	Implementation Problems	Headteachers		SUBEB Staff	
		Mean	Ranking	Mean	Ranking
1.	Insufficient teachers	2.11	6 th	2.04	7 th
2.	Insufficient classrooms	1.81	9 th	1.91	8 th
3.	Poor quality of teachers	2.06	7 th	2.20	5 th
4.	Insufficient desks for pupils	2.63	3 rd	2.34	4 th
5.	Inadequate instructional materials	3.15	2 nd	3.51	1 st
6.	Poor school libraries	3.30	1 st	3.31	2 nd
7.	Poor office accommodation	1.91	8 th	1.84	9 th
8.	High teacher-pupil ratio	1.72	10 th	1.50	10 th
9.	Lack of ICT equipment	1.40	11 th	1.38	11 th

10.	Poor teacher motivation	2.40	4 th	2.18	6 th
11.	Poor funding	2.38	5 th	2.41	3 rd
	Average mean	2.26		2.24	

Table 1 shows the weighted means and ranking of the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. Poor school library was ranked first by the headteachers, followed by inadequate instructional materials. Insufficient desks for pupils came 3rd in this category with poor teacher motivation taking the 4th position. Other were poor funding 5th, insufficient teachers 6th, and poor quality of available teachers 7th. The least of the implementation problems in the headteachers' category was lack of ICT equipment.

For the SUBEB staff inadequate instructional materials was ranked 1st, followed by poor school libraries. The 3rd in the order was poor funding, closely accompanied by insufficient desks for pupils 4th. Others were poor quality of teachers 5th, poor teacher motivation 6th, and insufficient teachers 7th. The last in the order was lack of ICT equipment. A general comparative look at the means and ranking by the two groups of respondents reveals an agreement in their responses, implying that primary education in the state is faced with a number of implementation problems, ranging from poor school libraries to lack of ICT equipments in the schools.

Research Question 2

What is the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff of the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2
Weighted Means and Ranking of the Perception of Primary Education Prospects by Headteachers and SUBEB Staff

S/N	Prospects	Headteachers		SUBEB Staff	
		Mean	Ranking	Mean	Ranking
1.	Sufficient teachers	2.66	4 th	2.46	6 th
2.	Sufficient classrooms	3.14	1 st	3.22	1 st
3.	High quality of teachers	2.90	2 nd	3.20	2 nd
4.	Sufficient desks for pupils	2.51	7 th	2.38	8 th
5.	Adequate instructional materials	2.61	5 th	2.49	5 th
6.	Better school libraries	2.17	9 th	2.30	9 th
7.	Better office accommodation	1.48	10 th	1.51	11 th
8.	Normal teacher-pupil ratio	2.69	3 rd	2.81	3 rd
9.	Provision of ICT equipment	1.48	10 th	1.80	10 th
10.	Adequate teacher motivation	2.27	8 th	4.41	7 th
11.	Improved funding	2.61	5 th	2.58	4 th
	Average Mean	2.41		2.47	

Table 2 presents the weighted means and ranking of the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State by headteachers and SUBEB staff. The table reveals consistency in the ranking of the two groups of respondents. For instance, both groups ranked sufficiency of classroom accommodation 1st, followed by improved teacher quality. Normal teacher-pupils ratio was ranked 3rd by the two groups. Adequacy of instructional materials was ranked 5th by both groups, better school libraries ranked 9th, while provision of ICT equipment was ranked 10th. However, the two groups

Primary Education in Akwa Ibom State: Implementation Problems and Prospects

vary in their ranking of the prospect for sufficient teachers 4th and 6th respectively, sufficient desks for pupils 7th and 8th, better office accommodation 10th and 11th, teacher motivation 8th and 7th and improved funding 5th and 4th for headteachers and SUBEB staff respectively. Generally, the two groups have high prospects for primary education in the state.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the perception of head teachers and SUBEB Staff on the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3

t-test Results on Implementation problems of Primary Education in Akwa Ibom State

S/n	Implementation Problems	Respondents	\bar{x}	SD	t-cal	Dec.
1.	Insufficient teachers	Headteachers	2.11	.14	1.01	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.04	.13		
2.	Insufficient classrooms	Headteachers	1.81	.71	.98	NS
		SUBEB Staff	1.91	.76		
3.	Poor quality of teachers	Headteachers	2.06	.63	.91	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.20	.64		
4.	Insufficient desks for pupils	Headteachers	2.63	.82	2.64	S
		SUBEB Staff	2.34	.81		
5.	Inadequate instructional materials	Headteachers	3.15	.79	2.89	S
		SUBEB Staff	3.51	.78		
6.	Poor school libraries	Headteachers	3.30	.94	1.11	NS
		SUBEB Staff	3.31	.94		
7.	Poor office accommodation	Headteachers	1.91	.15	2.72	S
		SUBEB Staff	1.84	.14		
8.	High teacher-pupil ratio	Headteachers	1.72	.41	1.32	NS
		SUBEB Staff	1.50	.42		
9.	Lack of ICT equipment	Headteachers	1.40	.40	.99	NS
		SUBEB Staff	1.38	.41		
10.	Poor teacher motivation	Headteachers	2.40	.42	1.23	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.18	.44		
11.	Poor funding	Headteachers	2.38	.46	1.30	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.41	.44		

N = 235; df = 233; t - cri = 1.96

S = significant; NS = not significant

Data analysis for hypothesis one revealed no significant difference in the perceptions of headteachers and SUBEB staff on the problems of insufficient teachers, insufficient classrooms, poor quality of teachers, poor school libraries, high teacher, pupil ratio, lack of ICT facilities, poor teacher motivation, and poor funding. Their calculated t-values were less than the critical t-value of 1.96, this implies that both groups of respondents agree that there are problems in these areas of primary

education implementation in the state. However, significant differences existed in the perception of the respondents on areas of insufficient desks for pupils, inadequate instructional materials, and poor office accommodation. The calculated t-values here were greater than the critical t-value of 1.96.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the perception of headteachers and SUBEB Staff on the prospect of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4
t-test results on the prospect of Primary Education in Akwa Ibom State

S/n	Prospects	Respondents	\bar{x}	SD	t-cal	Dec.
1.	Sufficient teachers	Headteachers	2.66	1.67	1.62	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.46	1.66		
2.	Sufficient classrooms	Headteachers	3.14	1.82	1.45	NS
		SUBEB Staff	3.22	1.87		
3.	High quality of teachers	Headteachers	2.90	1.96	1.56	NS
		SUBEB Staff	3.20	1.89		
4.	Sufficient desks for pupils	Headteachers	2.51	1.56	2.67	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.38	1.58		
5.	Adequate instructional materials	Headteachers	2.61	1.62	2.89	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.49	1.59		
6.	Better school libraries	Headteachers	2.17	1.34	1.03	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.30	1.37		
7.	Better office accommodation	Headteachers	1.48	1.29	2.99	NS
		SUBEB Staff	1.51	1.31		
8.	Normal teacher-pupil ratio	Headteachers	2.69	1.77	3.01	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.81	1.74		
9.	Provision of ICT equipment	Headteachers	1.48	1.66	1.11	NS
		SUBEB Staff	1.80	1.61		
10.	Adequate teacher motivation	Headteachers	2.27	1.11	1.28	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.41	1.13		
11.	Improved funding	Headteachers	2.61	1.47	1.22	NS
		SUBEB Staff	2.58	1.39		

N = 235; df = 233; t - cri = 1.96

S = significant; NS = not significant

In testing hypothesis two, no significant differences were observed in the perceptions of the headteachers and SUBEB staff in seven of the identified prospect areas of primary education in the state. Their calculated t-values were less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore retained as the four prospect areas with higher calculated t-values made no significant difference in the overall analysis. The implication is that both groups of respondents agree that there are prospects for successful implementation of primary education in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

The answer to research question one and test of hypothesis one revealed no significant difference in the perception of primary school heads and SUBEB staff on the implementation problems of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. The respondents agreed on the existence of such problems as insufficient teachers, insufficient classrooms, poor quality of teachers, poor school libraries, high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of ICT facilities, poor teacher motivation and poor funding. The calculated t-values in these areas were less than the critical t-value. In the areas of insufficient desks for pupils, inadequate instructional materials, and poor office accommodation, the calculated t-values were greater than the critical t-values. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis, implying that problems exist in the implementation of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. The problem areas have been duly identified. This finding agrees with many other studies. Ayeni and Oyebanji (1997) found out in their study that school libraries in Nigeria were mostly non-functional due to neglect and inadequate funding. Some primary schools do not even have a library. Those that have cannot boast of current books and journals. Librarians are not posted to most primary schools in the state, and the library doors remain closed most of the time. As a result, both staff and pupils are deprived of the benefits of this important educational resource center.

This happens to be the case in many other areas of implementation. Most primary schools in the state have not been provided with ICT facilities. Many teachers are not even aware of the existence of a national policy on computer education in the country (Abimbade, 1998). Infrastructural facilities are either not there at all or dilapidated and not suitable for use (Akomolafe, 2001). Teacher-pupil ratios are as high as 1:70 in most schools while dearth of qualified teachers is reported in most of the schools (UBE, 2000).

To crown it all, funding of primary education is grossly inadequate. The institutions are grossly under-funded (Afolabi, 1990). These problems impede the successful implementation of primary education in Akwa Ibom State, hence negating the implementation strategies as provided by the National Policy on Education.

The answer to research question two and subsequent test of hypothesis two revealed no significant difference in the perceptions of primary school heads and SUBEB staff on the prospects of primary education in Akwa Ibom State. Seven of the calculated t-values were less than the critical t-value of 1.96. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis. The implication is that there are prospects for successful implementation of primary education in the state. This perception may be based on the current improvement trends in the implementation of educational programmes in the state. Free and compulsory basic education has been declared by the Akpabio led administration in the State. Senior secondary education in the state is also free. Schools have started experiencing face-lift, and adequate books are to be supplied at no cost to pupils. Stakeholders believe primary education will receive more attention in the state in the near future.

Conclusion

Based on the data analyses, it is concluded that:

- Primary education in Akwa Ibom State is faced with a number of implementation problems such as insufficient teachers, insufficient classrooms, poor quality of teachers, inadequate instructional materials, poor school libraries, poor office accommodation, high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of ICT equipment, poor teacher motivation, and poor funding.
- There are better prospects in the implementation of primary education in the state given the steps taken so far by the state government to improve the education sub-sector.

Recommendations

- On the basis of the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, it is recommended that:
1. Adequate attention be given to primary education in the state as it is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system.
 2. Teachers should be adequately and effectively trained to cater for primary education in the state. This will reduce the teacher-pupil ratio while enhancing effective teaching-learning process.
 3. Proper attention should be given to school infrastructure through proper maintenance culture.
 4. School libraries should be properly equipped to meet with current standard. Besides, teacher librarians should be posted to all primary schools to take care of the library.
 5. Efforts should be made by all stakeholders to provide primary schools with ICT facilities as provided for in the National policy.
 6. Specialist teachers should be trained and posted to all primary schools to take care of the areas of needs.
 7. Pupils should be provided with adequate books and other learning materials to justify the essence of the free education programme.
 8. Schools should be adequately funded and teachers motivated to encourage effective service delivery.

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