

**SUB-THEME: TOWARDS IMPROVING PRIMARY
SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA BY 21ST CENTURY**

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BY 21st CENTURY

ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on ways of improving Primary Education for National Development. Primary Education which is the bedrock of National Development process requires more attention. The national Policy on Education (1981 revised), refers to Primary Education as "Education given in an institutions for children between the ages 6 - 11 years plus. This paper also examined the objectives of primary Education in Nigeria and suggests ways by which those objectives can be achieved. It further put up some recommendation that could be helpful for the improvement of Primary Education in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Primary Education according to National Policy on Education (1981 revised) is an institution for children aged 6 to 11. Since the west of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. As this level is the foundation and most important level in any educational system. If anything is wrong with the foundation of a story building, definitely the structure on top is in danger. In essence, one cannot rightly claim that a policy has been implemented if the objectives of the organization for which it is wide have not been achieved.

The general objectives of Primary Education in Nigeria as stimulated in the National Policy on Education (1981 revised)-are as follow:

- (a) The involution of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.
- (b) The laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (c) Citizenship Education as a basis for effective, participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (d) Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes.
- (e) Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment
- (f) Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity.
- (g) Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

Looking at the various list of objectives stated above it become clear that Nigeria want to provide qualitative Primary Education for her citizens. Scholars like Ukeje (1985), Onwuka (1985) and Nwagwu (1985) all came up with similar statements regarding what primary school education in Nigeria should be aimed at. This is so because it has become an established principle that a huge and heavy structure cannot rest on a weak foundation to many Nigerian especially literates, the

provision of a sound and highly quality primary education is a subject of great concern.

WAY OUT TO ACHIEVE AIMS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Primary School children are being groomed to live in the future. They are the input from the society into the school system and the school system control is detected at the attainment of its output, that is, the education of its pupils. The likes of school's output, into the society, delectates the future of the nation and its development. It then means that primary education needs solid basic foundation to be able to carry other cadres of education.

In the opinion of Balyejuwa (1982), for primary education to achieve national objectives, as stated in the national policy of education, the present curriculum is quite inadequate. Primary education has faced many challenges since Nigeria independence till now. Inadequate qualified teachers and teaching methods have contributed greatly to these challenges. Uche (1985), in his contribution, stated that the quality of teachers, curriculum and the textbooks in use, the physical plant, including the furniture, the equipment, the existence of libraries and above all the administration and the tone of the school are part of the challenges.

Curriculum entails all the things that the children learn at the school whether it is included in the Syllabus or not. Khnimere (1982) described curriculum as not only the knowledge and skills (Cognitive and Psychomotor) to be taught also Include feelings, values and attitudes learned at schools (affective domain).

National Policy on Education (1981 revised) section (3) sub-section (b) under primary education emphasized on "laving of a sound basis for scientific thinking". Thinking can be described as the method of intelligent experience in the course which it takes; and reflect thinking as problem solving. To a large extent, the concept of thinking has provided a basis from which progressive educators can develop models for teaching their learners to think through mental manipulation of facts and concepts rather than memories note and textbooks information and this can easily be added to the development of educational process. The children moving to the level of education will continue with it, which can make the part of the policy be achieved.

In improving primary education, reflective and critical thinking are part of educational process. Uche (1989) opines that an education that is sort of thinking does not worth existence and since thinking is not an inmate process or intelligence, it must therefore be appropriately nourished, to developed and perfect. It follows that the earlier the interaction to ensure appropriate development of thinking, the better for the child and the society.

SOME HINDRANCESS TO THE ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

The following are some of the factors impeding the successful development OF creative, inventive, critical, energetic, intelligentsia and reflective thinking skills and habits in students.

- i. Inadequate physical structure and infrastructure necessary for effective learning.
- ii. Inadequate staffing of the primary schools which often call for merging of classroom as a result of large population of pupils.
- iii. Qualification of teachers in the system e.g old Grade II trained teachers with outdated orientation and methods (though majority of them are now in-service training-part time NCE programme).
- iv. The Nigeria primary school Teachers themselves, their attitudes, behaviour, manners, self-respect, image discipline.
- v. Lacking of reading rooms space, children's books, entertainment reading cartons, picture stories and children library materials.
- vi. Lack of professional ethic by Teachers because of the absence of a recognized and authoritative professional body.
- vii. Administrative set UP and control of Teacher's promotion, salaries, recruitment and transfer.

Various problems mentioned above, can be tackled successfully, if there is a political will by governments to have a solid and reliable primary education system.

If we are to stimulate and develop critical thinking which will be useful in future among students, we would gradually expect the following in our primary schools.

- i. A lesser emphasis on student's compliance with traditional classroom behavioural expectations on the part of the students.
- ii. A classroom climate that encourages student's participation to a large extent.
- iii. An overall teaching approach, that is essentially non-directive. This means that the students rather control the learning process, by doing most of the talking and exercising greater enthusiasm in finding out facts.

The above, however should be noted that they are not the only possible strategies for the stimulation of students for national development of primary education. The condition of classroom counts a lot in evaluation of the teacher and pupils in primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Primary education, studies, must be offered as a compulsory subject in all out N.C.E institutions in Nigeria. This will give room for specialization for primary school teachers.
- ii. NPEC and SPEB should grant adequate funds for management of primary school education at the Local Government levels.
- iii. The policy that the N.C.E shall be the minimum teaching qualification for primary school teachers should be vigorously pursue.

- iv. Supervisory role for the maintenance of standards and innovation should be provided by the inspectorate division of the Federal Ministry of Education.
- v. Rotational method of Teaching should be adopted in our primary schools to allow for specialization.
- vi. The cooperation of faculties and institutes of education, as well as training colleges, that would produce specialist teachers in these areas and generate also the production of textbooks and teaching materials is highly needed in this country.
- vii. NPEC, SPEB and LGEAS should always remember that they are not politicians. Therefore, the distribution of materials and the selection of schools for rehabilitation should be based on need, sincere need rather than political considerations alone, or cheap publicity only. Let us genuinely address the problems facing education at primary school level in this country
- viii. NPEC, SPEB AND LGEAS should do everything possible to get people at the grassroots involved in the management of primary education in Nigeria. These include parents, religious leaders and traditional rulers because, as we all realize, which some schools are overcrowded some are sparsely populated, even within the same local government area

CONCLUSION

One will then realize that, much priority have given to other segments of education, especially, the universities and research institutes. We seem to forget that country that neglects the education of its plumbers, its pipes, will not hold water. The primary school pupils of today will become university students tomorrow. Their interest, motivation and dedication to academic work, will largely be determined by the kind of primary education they went through. Neglect of our primary education is at the expense of the true national growth and development.

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