

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SOUND BASIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS EDUCATION FOR QUALITATIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

¹Dr. Umar Kwami and ²Dr. Onuh James
Director, Academic Planning, National Commission of Colleges of Education
(NCCE) Abuja, ²Department of Science and Technology Education, Faculty of
Education, University of Jos

ABSTRACT

Qualitative education is a determinant factor for meaningful development in any given nation. Nigeria's educational structure has collapsed in quality and quantity at all levels, and particularly in basic primary and secondary schools. The scorecard for Nigeria in terms of access to basic education is still not encouraging. The quality of basic education received in our education institutions is below standards and has affected the quality of services and accountability in the society. The paper examines a deliberate and conclusion effect at achieving the goals of basic primary and secondary education in Nigeria, basic primary and secondary education as the basic for sound foundation in education, improvement of basic primary and secondary education as sustainable development in education. In the light of these and other issues, adversely affecting the quality of product of education, this paper recommends, among others that the implementation of national policy in primary and secondary education by state and rural institutions should be monitored measure quality output, mere should be a face lift with modern infrastructures in form of building for administration, classroom, introduction technology workshop, library equipment and all relevant institutional materials to ensure effective teaching and learning.

Key words: Basic education, Qualitative education, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Education as development agent is valued by all Nations in the world because it has brought total liberation for man. It has transformed man from ignorance and misery to knowledge and happiness. It has made man useful to himself, his generation and beyond. It has been observed in Umoh (2020) that education helps the individual to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and emotionally by providing suitable environment teaching new knowledge attitude and skills that will enable people to be useful to themselves and the society. Education at the basic primary and secondary schools strengthen the learners feet to climb the educational ladder to the zenith of academic attainment of a good foundation is laid.

Education is a priceless legacy of framework impotence to the individual and society. No nation can make any progress without education. The World Conference on the education for All (EFA) held in Thailand in 1990 accepted the following characteristics of basic education: Access, Equality, Quality and Efficiency. This implies that any education that is not accessible, qualitative, efficient and non- discriminatory cannot be regarded as basic education (Obanya 2006). This situation cannot favour the achievement

of the goal of education for Nigerian, and cannot help the country to advance technologically.

Qualitative education is a key factor for the meaningful development in any given nation. The development of any nation is the responsibility of every citizen of that nation. To perform the task of national development every citizen is expected to access qualitative education. The Nigerian government made it clear in the National Policy on Education (2013) that education is an instrument par- excellence for effective all-round development. This implies that education empowers an individual economically, socially and politically. According to Fafunwa (2004) and Adaralegbe in Salawu (2011) education is a process, which enable a person not only to be able to read and write but also to be proficient in a given job or occupation to enable him contribute effectively in his society. Any meaningful provision of basic education must therefore, lay a sound foundation of life-long learning and acquisition of life skills and competencies.

Qualitative Basic Education

Basic education means the type of education, in quality and content, that is given in the first level of education. Qualitative basic education can be described as a functional education that is effective, efficient, sustainable and relevant to the evolving individual and society needs and ensures quality among the citizens (Onyebu and Okanume-Onah: 2013). Although there are many international treaties, convention and declarations dealing with various aspects of education, they are generally silent about how well education systems could and should be expected to perform (Igbuzor, 2006).

The goals of education could be achieved through providing good basic education to the citizenry. In the Nigerian context, the implication of qualitative basic education is that type of education that will ensure adequate teacher preparation, flexible and innovative curriculum, adequate funding, diversified instructional materials and appropriate language of instruction, good support services, monitoring, assessment and evaluation (Catholic Secretariat Nigeria: 2012).

The conception of qualitative education allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context (Salawu 2011: xv). The Federal Government of Nigeria stated the National education goal as inculcation of national consciousness and unity; the inculcation o the values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of skills abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his / her society. Ukeje (1996) posits that it still possible to build a great, peaceful just, united, strong and self-reliant, democratized and prosperous nation when we effectively utilize the tremendous power of education.

National Objective of Basic Education in Nigeria

In 1990, during the world conference at Jomtien, the framework Action on Education for All (EFA) was developed, and every nation was urged to pursue attainment of the objective according to its developmental needs and capacity. The Nigerian government in response to this declaration launched the Universal Basic Education. Basic education according to NPE (2013: 4) is education given to children

aged 0-15 years and shall be free, compulsory, universal and qualitative. It comprises 1 year of kindergarten, 6 years of primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. For purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE), with the following objectives:

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
3. Reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
4. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling; and
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Basic Primary Secondary Education as the Foundation Of Education

A house that has a shaky foundation will eventually collapse sooner or later. This is why it is advisable to employ the services of experts when one is set to build a house. In laying an enduring foundation for the entire education sector to build on, the providers of primary education should:

- (a) Lay the foundation in quality of teachers
- (b) Lay the foundation in quality of instructional materials/facilities
- (c) Lay the foundation in proper funding
- (d) Lay the foundation in quality output from primary schools

(A) Laying the Foundation in Quality of Teachers

The teacher is the facilitator of learning. Without the teacher, most of the goals and aims of education cannot be achieved. The teacher holds the key to learners' educational attainment; if he can use the key effectively, the needed foundation will be laid in the primary level hence the need for him to be properly trained. The FRN

(2004), recognizes this fact and emphasizes that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis, since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. Presently, the training of teachers for this level of education is done at the colleges of education, National Teachers' Institute, Institute of Education and Faculties of Education in Universities and School of Education in Universities of Technology. This is because the government has phased out teachers with Grade Two Certificate (TCII), and pegged minimum qualification for teaching in the primary school at Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

(B) Laying Foundation in Quality of Instructional Materials/Facilities

The instructional materials and facilities are of great importance in the school system. Without them no meaningful learning can take place. For teaching, these

materials should be provided – chalkboard, chalk, maps, globes, textbooks, magazines, chairs and desks, musical instrument, cupboards, school diary and register, continuous assessment, record books, charts, etc. others include school facilities such as buildings, pipe borne water, good lightning, television, video machine and tape recorder. Similarly, Umoh (2006) maintains that the learners must be made familiar with radio, television, kerosene and gas cookers, scientific toys, instrument and machines. The learner must be allowed to use, touch, feel and play with them. He contends that, the construction of some of these instruments, where possible, by the teachers is to acquaint them with their structural components, even if the materials are improvised is an important part of science education in the primary school. For any teacher to perform the above functions judiciously in the primary school, he or she must not only be well trained but must be adequately motivated for the job.

(C) Laying the Foundation in Proper Funding

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) introduced in 1955 by the government of Western Region and in 1957 by the government of Eastern Region collapsed because of poor funding. In 1976, the federal government of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education which also failed due to lack of proper planning and funding. Accordingly, Onwueme (2001), notes that funding of education in Nigeria has been problematic over the years. He maintains that funding of primary education in particular should be handled by the three tiers of government. Accordingly, Onwueme (2001), report that:

- (a) Federal Government should be responsible for the provision of building and furniture, teachers' salaries and allowances and payment for the teacher-training programme.
- (b) State government should be responsible for the provision of equipment and libraries.
- (c) Local government should assume responsibility for non-teaching staff salaries, textbooks and maintenance of buildings
- (d) Parents should provide writing material and clothing for their children.

(D) Laying Foundation in Quality of Output from Primary Schools

The success of the entire educational system in Nigeria depends greatly on the output from the primary schools. By quality of output, it means the quality of the child or children processed from our public primary schools after six to eight years of schooling. This concern was expressed by Okoro (2005) by posing the following questions

– what emerges from the learner who has acquired this level of education? What are the expectations? What can the person (child) do? What can he not do? What problem can he/she solve for self, family and community?

Challenges of Sound Basic Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria

The challenges facing sound Basic Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria are enomous;

- (1) **There is the Poor provision of facilities and equipment for effective teaching and learning.** In most of the schools there are no sufficient instructional materials available and even where the Universal Basic Education schools are located, the existing primary schools buildings and equipment are the same with UBE secondary schools. Both the teachers and students are demoralized because there are no changes in what is obtainable.
- (2) **Poor funding of education:** What has resulted to the first challenge is the poor funding. Funding is a pre-requisite for all activities and success of provision of education in Nigeria. Although basic education has remained the constitutional responsibility of local government, the sector has consistently remained an orphan which explains its piteous state of affairs. This is why Oladipo in Omeh (2020) has however, lamented that efforts made so far to make education qualitative and functional have not yielded desirable results in Nigeria due to socio-cultural and political diversity of the nation, hence, the observed variations in the implementation of the national policy on education. If education is the right of every Nigerian child and adult, efforts should be made to remove every form of socio-cultural and political barriers against the successful implementation of quantitative sound basic primary and secondary education in Nigeria.
- (3) **Another challenge is the number of subject taught by each teacher.** Oladipo in Omeh (2020) on primary education policy implementation with dismay, that there are 14 subjects on the primary school time-table. The curriculum is overloaded resulting in superficial teaching by the teachers. This is why a teacher with poor foundation in mathematics and elementary science will definitely lay poor foundation in children in the elementary science at the primary school level.
- (4) Another vital challenge to qualitative sound primary and secondary education is Examination malpractice in Nigeria schools which is currently a big business involving syndicate and stakeholders in the schools all levels. Some teachers who could not cover their scheme of work do resort to adequate collaborations with the parents and the pupils/students to commit all these malpractices. By cheating to get scores and pass common entrance examinations to secondary schools, the same virus of examination malpractice is nurtured and they cheat from class work to external qualifying examinations like West African Examination Council (NECO), and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- (5) Another challenge is the issue of Teacher's salary and allowances: The non-payment of teachers' salaries and allowances when due promote non-challant attitude towards teaching as a profession. To worsen the situation teachers are recruited on temporary basis. Employment of teachers in the UBE schools is mostly to satisfy certain politicians. This is why, staffing, sitting and monitoring of schools have political undertones.
- (6) There is also the lack of political will and commitment to education policies: There is no Strong political will and commitment by politicians or leaders. Enough budget allocation should be budgeted to education to allow the strong few and the realization of the good of basic education in Nigeria help to and the budget allocation to education is still very low, instead of 1:25.

Improving the Quality of Education in Primary and Secondary education for sustainable development

- i. **Use of technology:** In most schools today, smart boards, desktop computers, and video conferencing are used for imparting education. Technology has also been making a significant impact on the way students are taught in schools. This does not enhance learning only, but improves retention rates.
- ii. **Training Teachers:** Teachers are the most important people in the school. They are responsible for developing students' learning skills and shaping their character. The training of teachers help upgrade technology to impart education. The teachers that will utilize these technologies need to be appropriately trained as well.
- iii. **Cultural activities:** A primary school can be successful in imparting education if and only if the process of delivering classes is interjected with some extra-curricular activities in schools in Nigeria.
- iv. **Counselling of students:** There are no two students alike, nor can they all cope with the demands of school in the same way. It is necessary for teachers in schools to sympathize with the children who spend a lot of time away from their parents at their institution.
- v. **Parent Teacher meetings:** School improvement is impossible if parents and teachers are not informed about the latest challenges and threats facing each side is to organize regular parent-teacher meetings.

CONCLUSION

Education is a social service and an instrument for Sustainable National Development. The World Conference on the Education For All (EFA) held in Thailand in 1990 accepted the following characteristics of basic education: Access, Equality, Quality and Efficiency. That implies that any education that is not accessible, qualitative, efficient and non-discriminating cannot be regarded as basic education (Obanya in Onvieh 2020), with adequate planning good will and effective management on the part of all stakeholders of education, the basic education programme in Nigeria can be accessible to the target group and noble objective of providing free and compulsory university basic education for all will be achieved in Nigeria..

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sound basic Primary and secondary education are the foundations on which all other levels of education are laid. Such foundations should therefore be strong, reliable and capable of withstanding all forms of pressures atmospheric, socio-cultural, ethnic and economic pressures. It is therefore recommended that:

- (a) Government should ensure that the implementation of the national policy on primary and secondary education by state owned and private institutions are closely monitored to ensure uniformity in quality of output from our nation's primary and secondary schools.

- (b) Funding for primary and secondary education should be shared among the Federal, States and Local Government on a reasonable ratio in their annual budgets for education.
- (c) All primary and secondary schools education in Nigeria, irrespective of where they are located should be given a face lift with modern infrastructure Administrative building, classrooms, introductory technology workshops, library equipment and all relevant materials to ensure effective teaching and learning.
- (d) Teaching in basic primary and secondary schools education should not be open to whoever wants to teach for a living, only professionally trained, talented and well screened teachers should be employed to teach in the schools.
- (e) A new salary structure for teachers should be implemented to enhance their job satisfaction and retention.
- (f) Only experienced basic school teachers should be assigned to teach and lay solid foundation in junior classes.
- (g) To check incidence of examination malpractices in primary schools, teachers should be made to teach effectively and cover their scheme of work sufficiently. Moreover, only teachers of proven integrity and good conduct should be assigned to supervise/invigilate internal and external examinations. Those caught in examination malpractices such as students, teachers, invigilators and supervisors should be made to face the existing law which should be activated.

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