PRIMARY EDUCATION AND VALUE ATTAINMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

By

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Abstract
This paper examined the role of primary education in the inculcation of national values to the citizens. The values of the society such as honesty, respect for human dignity, transparency, patriotism, courage and so on are supposed to be inculcated in the individuals for the development of the society. The study revealed that these values which are supposed to be transmitted through the primary schools are yet to be realized due to the following challenges: poor infrastructural development, insufficient qualified teachers, lack of computer education and some unnecessary changes in the curriculum. These challenges hamper the effective realization and attainment of these values in Nigeria. However, the researchers made the following recommendations: That the primary schools should be adequately equipped both in human and material resources, and there should be constant inspection and evaluation of the primary education programme for the preservation and attainment of the values for the overall development of the Nigerian Society.

Every level of education is designed for purposeful learning. To achieve the goals of every segment of the educational system depends on the learning environment, the availability of the facilities, adequate manpower, and administrative competency of
the school managers. All these situations however, vary, yet the aim of all learning situations and environment is to effect positive changes in the learner’s attitudes, skills, and knowledge (Mahuta, 2009). According to him, the major roles of education remains the outcome of learning experiences that effect changes in individuals and society at large. Thus education as a social transaction deals with the factors that enable human beings fit efficiently into the society, thereby promoting its values and standards.

The values held by society determine the standard or value outcomes expected of its members. The education philosophy of a nation is a reflection of the societal needs which need to be achieved through the channel of education.

The values of the societies are built in the national curriculum and the means of transmitting these values is through the educational institutions and primary school is the foundation of all other levels of the educational system, hence it should be improved for a solid foundation of the citizens.

With the present change in education, there is the need to re-emphasize or establish strong national values. In other words, there is need for value re-orientation in the country. This implies that there is then need to improve on the previous provisions of the Nigerian educational system especially in primary education in order to meet today’s challenges.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) (4th edition) (2004) has included subjects like Social Studies, Christian Religious Knowledge, Geography, Government and History where these values are to be inculcated in the learners, but the problem remains the implementation of the entire policy for the overall development of individuals and the society at large.

The Concept of Value

The concept of value in this context provides essential and organized practices and principles for the integration of individuals and groups in the society. It provides the generalized standard of behaviour that are expressed in more specific or concrete terms in the form of social norms.

Giddens (2006), opined that values are ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad. Otuebe (2001) states that values refer to widely held beliefs or sentiments that some activities, relationships, feelings or goals are important to the community and its well-being.
Nigeria, as a nation values honesty, transparency, patriotism, hard work, delight and so on, and Nigerian’s educational laws and pedagogy are designed to inculcate and develop the necessary values of the nation in the citizenry (Mahuta, 2009).

These values are transmitted through the school by means of gradual propagation. In view of the above, Aggarwal (2002), confirmed that education which inculcates values such as compassion, courage, honesty, tolerance and truthfulness will go a long way in developing balanced individuals and increasing positive human values for a better society.

**Primary Education and Values in Nigeria Educational System**

Primary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) is established to promote socio-physical and mental abilities of the children between the ages of 6-11 years. Tijani and Musa (2010), were of the opinion that this tier of education is universal and aimed at producing basic tools for further advancement in education to adulthood.

However, the goals of primary education as provided by national policy on education (2004:14) are as follows.
1. To inculcate permanent literacy; numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
2. To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
3. To give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
4. To mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child’s changing environment.
5. To give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limit of the child’s capacity.
6. To provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trade and crafts of the locality.

These laudable goals cannot be achieved without a functional curriculum content and its effective implementation.

Further the national values, which are built into the national curriculum are geared towards the attainment of these values as well as the promotion of peace and sustainable development. These values are cleanly contained in the national goals of education. The nation’s educational goals are derived from the philosophy of Nigeria education and they are as follows:
1. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society.
2. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and
social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and
contribute to the development of the society.

The curriculum of Nigeria education which emphasizes the inculcation of
national values on its citizens are transmittable through the schools. In supporting this
view, Mahuta (2002), stated that the educational system, through the schooling process
serves as an agent of socialization of the younger generation.

He further opined that the school serves as a channel to preserve and transmit
the cultural values of the society from one generation to another. Therefore the values of
the nation can best be preserved and taught through a functional and effective
implementation of the school curriculum. The inculcation and development of the
necessary values of the nation in the primary education system has the following
challenges which hampers its attainment in the society.

**Poor Infrastructural Development**

Primary education is bedeviled with dilapidated infrastructural facilities that are
not good enough to make any curriculum work no matter how beautiful it is packaged
A situation where classes are held under the trees constitutes a threat to academic
activities and quality education at the primary level. Again school demises when there is
a little shower of rain for the day, all these hinder effective teaching and learning. In
supporting this view Ada (2010), opined that the quality of education in the current
Nigerian society is on the decline from primary, post primary through tertiary
institutions to the universities.

Personal experience showed that the primary school pupils in some schools are
learning under dilapidated buildings and the pupils sit on the floor while the lesson is
going on. The question is how can teachers inculcate values such as honesty, dignity of
persons, patriotism, courage, transparency and sound character to the pupils when they
are learning under this harsh conditions?

There is no normal justification to hold against them for not attaining these
values in the society because the government and other stake holders in education
exposed them to these harsh and unconducive environment.

**Insufficient Qualified Teachers**

The qualified teachers to inculcate these values are lacking in primary schools,
as some abandon the pupils for farming and their business ventures without considering
the worth and dignity of the pupils. The teachers in primary schools are grossly inadequate compared to the population explosion of pupils in the schools. Again some teachers do not have the ability to display professionalism in teaching the expected values and skills through their subjects as some still teach with Teachers Grade II Certificate (TCII). In supporting this view, Bulus (2008) remarked that over 90% of the Nigerian school going children go to the public schools. These public schools owned by the various tiers of government lack the capacity to engage or retain qualified teachers, and the available ones are driven away by horrible conditions of service, no accommodation, transportation or any form of dignified life.

Lack of Computer Education

The introduction of computer education in primary schools as specified in the national policy on education (2004) signified the need for adequate supply of relevant gadgets with which to train the pupils in computer application skills.

However, this has not been made possible due to insufficient and in some cases, lack of computers. According to Abdulgatar, Tinja & Umar (2012) in their study, discovered that 2-3 computers were found in primary schools. The researcher’s visit to some primary schools in Rivers State confirmed the ugly situation where no computers are found in these schools. This situation in primary schools hinders the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the preservation of the national values for the functionality of the individuals and the development of the society.

Unnecessary Changes in School Curriculum

Another problem is that of frequent changes in school curriculum. Mbayuav (2012) opined that both primary and secondary education suffered unnecessary changes in curriculum, the reason being that every in-coming administration would like to effect a change whether positive or negative. The curriculum of primary education is so loaded without the corresponding human and material resources needed for its effective implementation. The curriculum should be relevant and realizable within the framework of the school management.

Alternative Strategies for Teaching Value Education in Nigeria

Amaele (2010) suggested the following strategies for teaching value education in Nigeria.

1. The need for a well-designed and defined national philosophy and philosophy of education. It is important to stress that most of the question of values, arising from education can be traced to the confused claims of the individual verses those of his society. There is the need in Nigeria to reconsider the claims, rights, and obligation of the individuals in relation to those of the society, and to strike a balance between the two for the formulation of a clearly-defined national.
philosophy of education worth the name as to give clues to the values and moral destiny of Nigeria, which the school should teach.

2. Integration of civic Education programme into the school curricular should be emphasized and not mere religious instruction as practiced in the schools today.

3. The teaching of values should be based on the inculcation of respect for human dignity and human rights, the rule of law, the dignity of labour, respect for constituted authority, development of character, national unity, patriotism, social justice, freedom etc.

4. Conducting research on value system: There is the urgent need for intensive research on the value system of the diverse cultures of Nigeria. Adequate knowledge of the value system of the diverse societal interest groups can be got through interviews, questionnaire, reading relevant texts, rating scale etc. Students can also be asked to itemize the values they cherish most, and those that they know the society cherishes in order of preferences. The teacher can then work with the students to rank these values in order of importance. This could help in strengthening the value system and its preservation to ensure its sustainability in the society.

**Suggested Ways of Attaining Value in Primary Education in Nigeria**

The researchers made the following suggestions:

1. The development of relevant and realistic curricula.
   
   The curricula should positively reflect the values and moral orientation of the nation. It should build self confidence and reliability in Nigerian youths.

2. Primary school teachers/administrators should be strongly advised to control and check the productivity of education through constant inspection and evaluation functions. This will help in the inculcation and preservation of national values.

3. The education of the pupils at the foundation level should focus on building up the individual morally, spiritually and psychologically for the promotion of sustainable economy for the overall development of the society.

4. Re-orientation of the teacher education is very necessary because these teachers in primary schools need to know how to operate the computer and to respect the worth and dignity of the pupils hence inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
Conclusion

Primary Education as the foundation of the educational system in Nigeria needs to be adequately equipped both in human and material resources for the attainment of the values and the development of the nation.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The primary schools should be adequately equipped both in instructional facilities and qualified human resources capable of promoting and preserving national values and cultural heritage.
2. Primary school teachers should learn to emphasize the inculcation of respect for human dignity, human right, patriotism, discipline, the rule of law, national unity, and respect for constituted authority among others.
3. Relevant and realistic curricula should be introduced with the corresponding facilities capable of preserving the values and cultural heritage of the Nigerian society.
4. There should be constant inspection and evaluation of the primary education programme.

References


