

RE-ENGINEERING PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR SELF EMPLOYMENT IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Dr. H. Sokari Adox-Okujagu

Abstract

Equipping the child with lifelong skills provides him with the courage for adult challenges. This paper examines child developmental theories, the primary school curriculum content for attainment of the goals of Nigeria education. Emphasis is placed on preparing children in developing skills for different vocations and in applying knowledge gained to jobs while in school. The demand for extreme transfer of theory from the curriculum which encourages paper qualification for a search for white collar jobs later is opposed. Importance is directed towards encouraging the practicing of individual aptitude for self employment for children in primary schools.

The Nigerian child is born into a cultural environment where the demands of the family and communities are generated and contributed by individuals. The child is not an exception in contributing to the financial relief of the home. Children find it quite interesting understudying adults at work and often times whether you assign jobs to them or not, they role play these adult work responsibilities at their play ground. There is need however while the child is in school to develop a sense of responsibility, dedication and self reliance. Developed countries around the world like United States of America and Britain have imbibed this culture of creating job opportunities for children during holidays by involving them in competitive sports, dancing and singing; children movies and less muscle straining jobs with meaningful wages for children. It must be noted here that this experience is not child abuse which is monitored by UNICEF where children are made to work in factories and industries because they are paid less. Learning psychologists have revealed very thrilling vocational discoveries about children and their working abilities. Irrespective of how they express vocation, the child develops the required responsibilities for adulthood while working as a child. The complain about lack of manpower does not arise if primary school pupils are prepared for work challenges while in school. Primary school should serve as a preparatory level for the child to develop skills for different vocations and apply knowledge gained to jobs while in school starting from the classroom to the challenging human resource industry.

Definition

Self employment is a means by which an individual applies skills acquired for self productivity and sustenance within his own jurisdiction. The individual is also capable of servicing a government agency or another non-governmental outfit. Here he is his own boss and could recruit his own staff when need be. He is self sufficient, available, confident and self reliant.

The Primary School Child

The primary school child as stipulated by the FRN (2004) is that individual of the ages 6-11 yrs + who is enrolled into the primary school for formal education. Wikipedia (2012) described the primary school child from Jean Piaget's theory of child development as that human entity that grows and learns by stages of cognitive development. This individual referred to here as a child naturally developed through these stages till he attained stability in behaviour in preparation for the assumption of adult abilities. The activities of the child's stages of development which ushers him into adulthood should be encouraged to go beyond psychological specifications.

Kohlberg, Skinner and Pavlov, human learning psychologists' emphasised reinforcement for expected behaviours. The primary school child is not a stranger to reinforcement. For the child payment of wages, salaries and allowances are all forms of reinforcement. To get any of these, one needs to do some specified work. (Wikipedia, 2009.)

The child ordinarily gets reinforced through the expression of good behaviour, running of errands and attending to domestic chores. Even in school he could get prizes for good grades, good self conduct or one form of expected exemplary performance or another. Exposing the child to societal practices that depicts respect for human dignity and protects rights will cause the child no serious harm. By the time the child establishes the notion that working and reinforcement at specified times goes with the concept of survival, this would develop towards improving the required skills for the achievement of this aim rather than looking for other means of surviving like opting for militancy, 'boko haram' or street robbery and others as is the case in Nigeria. Before this child completes primary education it should be expected that he would have acquired a stable character to adjust to changes and challenges. This is so expected because Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) records one of the objectives of primary education to include 'developing in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.' The child's primary education development creates room to welcome this change.

Career Options and the School Curriculum

For children there are endless options from which they could choose a career. These options have specialisations that could be classified into three basic services for government employment, private employment and for self employment. The school curriculum should prepare the child to fit in to all these classifications for all round employment. The primary school curriculum specifies subjects that teach the child about different kinds of vocations. Skills required for these professions are also specified. The child in the primary school is faced with the ordeal of choosing from these careers he is informed about.

The child's text books on vocational studies, quantitative reasoning and verbal reasoning does not specify the acquisition of skills for application to different vocations and for the classification of employment available in the child's society. The child has a good awareness of different kinds of jobs and work options. The child knows the occupation of either of his parents or guardian. He is aware that working puts food on the table, pays his school fees and buys clothing and clears bills generally. The basic education he acquires should stir for him an interest for easy career choice and also give him a preparatory firm background to achieve the requirements for employment.

There is however too much emphasis on letter grade knowledge in the primary school curriculum. The entire school curriculum is too overcrowded with subjects all directed towards acquiring text book knowledge. Children in the primary school are not given the liberality to acquire and apply skills for lifelong survival. Children are not supervised to conduct and present their own science projects; they are deprived of artistic practices because they are expected to choose from the super careers- medicine, engineering and law. Other vocations like teaching, hair dressing and tailoring are regarded as not productive for self and society.

The education the primary school child receives does not give room for the promotion of responsibility. The Nigerian child is seen as totally dependent on first his parents and then the government to provide for him. The child should be groomed to understand that parental and government responsibilities to him are measured in percentage but that he requires to be exposed to cultural values, societal norms and job options, self developing skills and activities for self sustenance for the future.

Children should be engaged seasonally in practicing basic skills of all vocations at their level of understanding. When children are engaged in competitive sports like football, basket and volley ball and competitive dance and singing even in church they should be paid allowances. Cooking could be lots of fun. Children enjoy cooking by the side of their homes and at play. They sometimes plead to be given spices and vegetables. If given opportunity to participate for real, their readiness would be amazing.

The Nigerian child is preoccupied with working for his parents, members of the extended families, family friends and petty cash paid jobs. Most times he receives regular abuses, welcomed with frowns for not selling off items when hawking and caning for constituting financial nuisance. When this child eventually becomes an adult and the education he acquired from the prime has not

equipped him with skills for self reliance and productive activities and the fact that he is no more a child that could be bullied by adults and he must survive, gives him the guts to explore to be a crime lord in the crime scene.

Moore (2011) is of the opinion that the primary school curriculum must educate the child to acquire both essential skills including communication, team-working and project management if children are to achieve their full career potentials. The child must understand that being a medical doctor cannot prevent him from acquiring and using the skill of tailoring. The curriculum should inform the child that a lawyer could be a hair dresser and also a carpenter. The child should be educated that acquiring knowledge in engineering will not deprive him from becoming a star singer or a movie actor. If an individual concentrates in learning only skills for one vocation, he will remain on the waiting list of when such job is available. This experience generates the complain of no manpower because the skills of the individuals available are not required. Skills gained from primary education should prepare a child to express readiness to fit in for all vocations particularly the complimentary vocations as to gain government, private and self employment.

Jobs Children Should Not Do

Heskin (2011) is of the opinion that no matter how much children should be involved in jobs they should be protected from jobs which place one child in a "power position" over others. This may not be the best choice in the primary grades. Jobs like line leaders, dismissal monitor or snack distributor can easily lead to bragging, playing favourites or other "abuses of power." Even with the best of intentions, jobs like handing out snack can place a child in the middle of an argument over who got the bigger cookie or fuller glass in a school that observes the feeding programme or are having a party. There certainly are valuable discussions to be had when these issues arise, and in higher grades it is useful to explore these situations. But "power" jobs with young children may create hurt or indignant feelings that are harder to dismiss in favour of a teaching moment.

School Management Jobs to Prepare the Child for Work

The school management should incorporate in her seasonal activities a proportional time for acquisition, practice, application and presentation of skills. Schools should have regular practical presentation of skills not just quiz, debates and end of year drama shows but science projects by individual children, arts exhibitions and presentation of exceptional skills.

Classroom jobs are routine jobs children could be assigned to do. Classroom jobs are a great way to teach children planning and responsibility by offering them the chance to take care of their own physical space and classroom procedures. Sharing jobs between more than one child add the elements of negotiation and group planning. Examples of cleanup and classroom maintenance jobs might include straightening paper supplies, sorting recycling, testing and weeding out dead markers and glue sticks, sharpening dulled pencils, wiping down tables (with water only... no chemical sprays or wipes), sweeping, trash check, librarian, cleaning dry erase boards, checking for misplaced toys or manipulatives and resorting, or really anything that reveals itself by looking around the classroom. There must be an assurance that all jobs assigned to children are safe, within easy reach, and broken up to be small enough to be age-appropriate as a responsibility.

Anderson, & Thiede, (2008) stated that procedural jobs might include tallying the number of kids buying lunch and reporting, checking and reporting absences, updating the calendar or other related tasks (counting which day of school, day of week, etc.), reporting on the weather for the day, answering the classroom phone when it rings, handing out work materials and more.

Other ideas for jobs and ways to enrich the classroom might include watering plants (picking a hearty variety watering jobs), reader of the day, bringing a healthy snack, inventing a part of a game or song for the day. However Redford, (2011) suggested that for many jobs, it might make sense to assign two or more children to the same responsibility. This not only keeps the overall number of jobs manageable, but also adds a new dimension for the children. Kids with shared jobs should plan how

and when they will be done. For example, will they plan a time to do them together or can one do the job in the morning and one later in the day? How will it be resolved if one child is doing the job and one is not fulfilling the responsibility. How can children fairly share a "fun" job? This is necessary as these are the experiences they would encounter as adult workers in organizations.

Shared jobs can offer children the added experiences of planning and organization, negotiation and conflict resolution. Discussions of fairness, trustworthiness, responsibility and class citizenship can all be explored.

Implications

Ignoring modification of the primary school curriculum holds the following implications:

1. Under-skilled future man power
2. Frustration of adult citizens
3. Non democratic, non egalitarian, disunited, strong but dependent nation
4. Non dynamic economy
5. Limited opportunities for all citizens due to a limited child curriculum
6. Regular implementation of poor government policies.
7. Increase of not required but skilled manpower in the labour market

Conclusion

The philosophy of education in Nigeria concentrates on sectors for national development. With education as a basic sector, FRN (2004) recorded that education in Nigeria should 'foster the worth and development of the individual' for the sake of that individual and the society. The education received in the primary school does not aim at accomplishing this policy. The Nigerian child is applauded when he expresses eloquence in the language in use; he receives prizes when his intellectual abilities are concentrated on high grades from basically the sciences, particularly mathematics, and the basic primary sciences and technology. This child graduates by this preparation from the primary level through University fully paper qualified with no practical skills to contribute to neither himself nor the development of his country. This child must survive so he opts for the most immediate and ready means of employment-crime, corruption and survival by force. These experiences have been ringing warning bells over the years. Whether primary school teachers up to University lecturers go on strike or not will not solve the problem. The Nigerian child should be busy and well occupied from the primary school with more life sustaining activities and less theory.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are feasible for the re-defining of primary education for the child's self productivity.

1. Children should be trained to acquire skills for use in vast vocations seasonally.
2. Keeping the Nigerian child practically busy while in school would keep him away from the street permanently.
3. Parents should desist from forcing children to babysit, hawk, and be employed as house helps as these forms of work are forms of child abuse.
4. Children should get allowances from taking jobs as paper lads, cleaners, and library attendants.
5. Schools should encourage children to do their own handwork themselves. Pupils would take delight in making such craft as brooms, fibres, knitting, and clay work.
6. In the formal school environment, provision should be made for the promotion of culture which trains the individual through vast vocations for self reliance.
7. Primary education should introduce the child to activities in the formal environment that would encourage him imbibe responsibilities in preparation for adulthood.
8. The curriculum should be modified. More emphasis should be placed on practical application of knowledge, skills and insight rather than on writing and talking.

References

- Anderson, M.C.M., & Thiede, K.W. (2008). Why do delayed summaries improve metacomprehension accuracy? *Acta Psychologica*. 128, 110-118.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC press.
- Heskin, N. (2011). *Classroom jobs for young children*. UK: Boise State University.
- Moore, C. (2011). *Children Need to Start Being Prepared for The World of Work at as Young as Six Years Old*. UK: Recruitment Firm Adecco Group Solutions.
- Redford, J. (2011). Metacomprehension and self-regulation in elementary and middle school children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 109 (3) 829-835.
- Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. (2009). *Learning psychologist*. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=LearningPsychologists & oldid= 478765086](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=LearningPsychologists&oldid=478765086)" last modified on 25th February 2012 at 12:29.
- Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. (2012). *Jean Piaget*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. "http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jean Piaget & oldid=479387699" last modified on 29th February 2012 at 00:23.