

STRATEGIES / MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NIGERIA BY THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract

This paper focused on the strategies / measures at the primary education in Nigeria. The paper discussed the concept of primary education in Nigeria. The paper actually X – rayed ten different measurers or strategies that can aid improvement on primary education in Nigeria. These strategies or measures include: (1) provision of adequate human resources. (2) Provision of adequate material resources. (3) Provision of adequate financial resources. (4) Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision. (5) Curriculum innovation. (6) Class Repetition. (7) Moral reorientation. (8) Dispensation of discipline in schools. (9) Time management and (10) Teachers' welfare. The paper concluded with a passionate appeal for the adoption of the suggested strategies in order to overcome all the bottlenecks found in primary schools in Nigeria.

Primary education is the first level in education. It is the foundation of education upon which all other levels are built upon. It is the education for children between the ages of 6 and 11⁺. The major aims of primary education are:

1. To inculcate permanent literacy (ability to read and write) and (2) to prepare the recipient for secondary education (FGN, 2004).

To diverse is to give variety to something for an improvement. So diversification at primary education simply means to seek alternative ways, means, techniques, methods and so on to aid achievement of the major aims of primary education. Why diversification? We diversify when there is the need for an improvement.

Today, the aims of primary education are rarely achieved in public primary schools. It is no longer news to hear that a primary six pupil could neither read a simple passage in primary two English Reader nor write ABCD-Z or spell the word "Nigeria". To worsen the whole thing such pupils are pushed to Junior secondary schools. A call to improve at primary education level is a welcomed idea.

The problem of education in Nigeria is not in policy making, but in policy implementation. The management of primary education is in the hands of the school head-teachers, the communities, the Local Education Authorities and the various state governments. The various strategies / measures in this paper if properly managed by the concerned authorities will actually bring about tremendous improvement in primary schools performances in all spheres of school life, such strategies include:

1. Provision of adequate human resources
2. Provision of adequate material resources
3. Provision of adequate financial resources
4. Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision
5. Curriculum innovation
6. provision of room for repetition
7. Moral re-orientation among the staff and pupils.
8. Dispensation of discipline in schools
9. Time management
10. Teachers' welfare.

Concept of Primary Education in Nigeria:

Primary education is the education given in institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus. It is the fundamental and foundation of every other education system (FRN 2004; 14). Its duration is six years, it is relatively compulsory in Nigeria. Primary education is the first formal exposure to education for many Nigeria children. A high premium is placed on this level of education to the extent that federal

government of Nigeria in National policy on Education (2004) declared that it is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system since the rest of the education is built on it.

Objectives of Primary Education in Nigeria:

Objectives of primary education as stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004; 14) are to:

- a. Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively.
- b. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- c. Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- d. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- f. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society.
- g. Provide the child with tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

The above objectives are laudable and lofty enough but will only be achieved when the prevailing factors hindering the effective teaching and learning in primary schools are tackled through effective management of diversification at primary education level.

Improvement at Primary Education Level in Nigeria.

Improvement at Primary education level has to do with new strategies or measures to be taken to see that the lofty objectives of primary education are achieved. Such new strategies or measures include the following:

1. **The provision of adequate human resources in existing public primary schools:** The official Teacher / Pupils ratio in Nigeria as contained in National Policy on Education 2004 is 1:35 for effective teaching and learning to take place. Nwakpa (2006) found that the teacher pupils ratio in Ebonyi State was 1:70 as against 1:35 recommended by FRN(2004). Anukam (2001) found teacher-pupil ratio in Imo State to be higher than the federal government recommendation in the National policy on education 1998 edition. The only remedy here is to ensure full compliance by every state government in terms of teacher pupils' ratio.
2. **Adequate provision of Facilities/ Material Resources:** Material resources in primary schools includes school buildings, offices, classrooms, libraries, text books, benches, chalk boards etc. Many researchers have found that many primary schools facilities in Nigeria are inadequately, provided with school materials. Nwakpa (2006) found that Ebonyi State primary schools were grossly inadequately provided with school materials. Bassey and Archibony (2001) in the same vein found inadequate material resources in cross River state. In 2008, Ekemezie found inadequate material resources in Nigeria primary schools. The importance of material resources in any business venture, primary schools inclusive cannot be over emphasized. No meaningful achievement can be made in the absence of adequate provision of material resources ;the new strategy or diversification could be that the head teachers should look inward, make some improvisations, make effective use of the P.T.A levies, involve the communities in the administration of the schools, use direct labour to do most of the school works, organize launching for specific project and so on in order to ensure that the aims and objectives of primary education are achieved.
3. **Provision of Adequate Financial Resources:** Availability of adequate financial resource is a life wire to every business venture, public or private. No matter how lofty and laudable business plans might be, they cannot be achieved without adequate provision of money. The issue of poor funding of primary education in Nigeria is as old as Nigeria herself. All the experiments Nigeria has been doing in her primary education have not succeeded because she has never matched her words with finance. The Universal Primary Education Scheme from 1976 till date have not succeeded not because of poor planning but because of poor funding.

Ekemezie (2008) opined that primary schools in Nigeria are not properly funded and this has affected teaching and learning adversely. Ekemezie (2008) maintained that because of improper funding, all the basic amenities that are supposed to be provided by the government as declared in the National Policy on Education (2004) are not provided, and such services are; school library, basic health scheme, counseling, educational resource centre and so on.

Really, lack of such resources have adversely contributed to poor teaching and learning in the primary schools. To improve on this, the new strategy, technique or diversification should be to look for alternative sources of funding the primary schools. In this regard, Enyi (2001) suggested that communities could be used to erect school buildings through direct labour especially if the government has provided the building materials. School heads could use fund raising approach to fund some major projects in schools. The school management and the P.T.A could appeal to well financially placed individuals in various communities to assist in the infrastructural development of their community primary schools. The recommendation of UNESCO that every nation should allocate 26% of her annual budget to education should be implemented without further delay, and if this is done, the public primary schools in Nigeria will automatically wear a new look in all ramifications.

4. Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision: It is a known fact that primary schools in Nigeria are not properly supervised or monitored by the concerned authorities. The teachers and pupils go to school at their convenience and teach whatever they wish to teach. Nothing serious is happening in the public primary schools. Children found in public primary schools today are regarded as children from very poor parents. To support the above assertion, Ekemezie (2008) found that instructions are not properly supervised in primary schools, and that primary schools are not visited by supervisors as it should be.

To arrest this ugly situation, the supervising agency of these primary schools, the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) should sit up and see that proper supervision is carried out in all the primary schools under their jurisdiction. The communities or villages where these schools are located can help in this regard through their participation in the school Parents Teachers Association (PTA). They can form monitoring teams to checkmate the activities of the teachers and pupils and even that of the head teachers. The head teachers should see supervision of instruction as their major job, and thus embark on it seriously.

5. Curriculum Innovation:

The major two aims of primary education are

1. To prepare the child to be able to know how to read and write and
2. To prepare the child for secondary education, and to be followed by moral and scientific up bringing at this level. Curriculum Planners should narrow the curriculum to those few areas, and expand their knowledge when they get to the secondary school level.

At this level attention should be given to the teaching of English language, Mathematics, Elementary science, Moral instruction. These four subjects should be taught on daily basis, while any other subject could be taught as elective.

6. Class Repetition: Repeating class means that those who fail at the end of an academic year should be allowed to repeat that class. The idea of mass promotion to the next class is very unhealthy to quality education. It does not encourage hard work, and does not promote quality education. What is the reason for examination if those who fail are not allowed to repeat? Mass promotion at the primary schools has made nonsense of school examination. Repetition makes pupils/students to be very serious with their studies. The more one repeats, the more one learns and improves.

7. Moral Reorientation: In 1960s and even in 70s, teachers were seen as custodians of morality and discipline, but what is happening today is a total contrast. Today, primary school teachers, virtually indulge and practise immoral things and various other vices such as raping their female pupils, absenteeism, lateness, poor teaching, examination malpractice, smoking, alcoholism, extortion etc. The presence of these vices in the primary schools calls for moral reorientation especially among the teachers to re-educate them on their moral conduct. One Igbo adage says “when the mother goat is eating grass, the children watch her and emulate her”. Thus, when teachers’ indulge in vices, the pupils watch them and copy them. This is the beginning of the societal vices. Any learning or knowledge that is devoid of morality is not worthwhile. To improve the primary schools; there is need for moral reorientation and rebirth among the primary schools teachers.

8. Enforcement of Discipline in Schools: Nwakpa (2006) opined that discipline means the ability to respect constituted authority and to observe established laws and regulations of any organization, while indiscipline is regarded as any act that does not conform with the societal values and norms. There are many types of indiscipline in the primary schools and they include: Truancy, absenteeism, poor teaching, sexual immorality, extortion, poor supervision of teachers etc. The above

listed vices in the primary schools need to be checked, controlled and stopped through enforcement of discipline by the concerned authorities starting with the head teachers of various schools. To improve teaching- learning and the quality of primary education, all those that indulge in indisciplinary behaviours in school must be brought to book without fear or favour. Life devoid of discipline is not worthy of living. A teacher devoid of discipline is not supposed to be a teacher. A teacher is supposed to be a role model, a character molder and a soldier of disciplinary conduct, but the reverse is now the case. It is not yet too late, something can still be done, and that is, all hands must be on deck. The supervising agency of primary schools should hence forth see that discipline is maintained in schools by making sure that any person, starting from the head teachers down to pupils who contravenes the school law or regulation is appropriately punished to serve as a deterrent to others.

9. **Time Management:** Time means, nothing if not attached with goals or objectives, and goals/objectives are strictly attached with time. So when a goal is set, there is a time frame within which that set goal should be achieved. For instance, the first goal or aim of primary education is to inculcate the ability to read and write in the recipients of primary education within a time frame of six years. So, this goal can be measured only after six years of schooling in the primary school.

Time is a very important resource and so, should be properly utilized. Time management is bad among many educational administrators in Nigeria. According to Omolaloye (1997), Nigerians seemed to be in the 18th Century when the rest of the world is already in the 21st century. The worst trait in time management is lack of punctuality followed by lack of regularity.

Observations show that primary school teachers, head teachers and their pupils are always found along the roads or on streets sluggishly going to school around 9.00am when the second lesson is already ending. There is high rate of lateness and absenteeism in our primary schools today because of poor time management in the primary schools. The question is how can you one achieve his goal or objectives when one toils with his allotted time? It is not possible.

To arrest this cankerworm, it calls for proper monitoring of schools and the activities of every teacher and even the head teachers, and meting out adequate punishment for every defaulter, such as surcharging, suspending or outright dismissal of teachers.

When teachers are punished, they will in turn punish the pupils who commit offences. To actually, achieve this, there should be reorientation, workshops or seminars for teachers and head teachers on “Time Management”.

10. **Teacher Welfare:** The welfare of teachers in the primary schools should be taken seriously by the employer of these teachers. There should be serious improvement in the welfare of those teachers. The salary of teachers should be paid on time. The promotion arrears of teachers should be paid without much delay. Maternity leave of the female teachers should be elongated to one full year.

Motorcycle loan should be given to every primary school teacher without interest, and spread the pay back period to five years. There should be free house accommodation on school compound for every school teacher. Thus, every school should build houses on the school compound for teachers as it was done in 1970s and 80s.

Special salary package of least ₦50,000 should be paid to primary school teachers in Nigeria. The Government of Nigeria should take teaching profession very seriously by taking the welfare of teachers very seriously as it is done to the medical profession.

Recommendation

The author of this paper strongly recommends the following: First and foremost, adequate human and material resources should be provided in the primary schools. Secondly, the government should take primary education in Nigeria very seriously and ensure that teachers are adequately taken care of. The adoption of all the discussed strategies should be up held.

Conclusion

Having understood the plight of Nigeria primary schools, the adoption of the suggested strategies or measures in this paper will serve as a Panacea to all the bottlenecks found in Nigeria primary schools.

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