

PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

Lami Ofie

Abstract

This paper looks at the term Primary Education, its nature and objectives. It again highlights the government's intention towards primary institution as stated in the National Policy on Education. It further examines the problems faced by this institution. The reference of primary education to economic rehabilitation and reliance is also discussed, Useful recommendations are also advanced.

Introduction

Primary Education as referred to in the National Policy on Education (1998:13), is the education given to children between the bracket ages of 6 and 11 plus. This level of education stands as a foundation upon which the rest of the education system is built upon. It is therefore, the key to the success or failure of the whole systems of education. Primary education is designed to prepare the child for other higher levels of education.

Adepoju in Orimidu (2004), sees primary education as the education which is exposed to children in primary institution, where the child acquires fundamental knowledge, skills, thought, feelings and actions, which are considered necessary for all citizens, regardless of social status, vocation or sex,

Generally, education is seen as a tool for a nation's development and very vital in the .life of its citizens. In line with this, Nwagwu (1977:12-13) observes that:

Today, education is universally accepted as a form of investment in human beings, which yields economic benefits or returns and contributes to a nation's future wealth and development by increasing the productivity and consumptive capacity of its citizens. Viewed in this way, all expenditure on education can to a great extent be justified in terms of potential contribution of education to economic growth and national development.

Education at the primary level is therefore, basic to life. This is the reason why the United Nations Organization (U.N.O) charter and the constitution of most nations provide this level of education to their members. World Bank as cited in Orimidu (2004), noted that primary education has direct impact on earning, farm productivity and hence on development as a result of the cognitive skills of literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills etc that it imparts to the pupils.

Objectives of Primary Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (1998:13), states the objectives of primary education in Nigeria as:

- (a) Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to co
 - (b) m
 - (c) municate effectively;
 - (d) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
 - (e) Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
 - (f) Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
 - (g) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
-
- (f) Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity;
 - (g) Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

To achieve the above laudable objectives, according to the National Policy on Education (1998:13-14), the primary school curriculum shall include:

1. Languages
 - (a) Language of the environment
 - (b) English
 - (c) French
2. Mathematics
3. Science
4. Physical and Health Education
5. Religious Knowledge
6. Agriculture/Home Economics
7. Social Studies and Citizenship Education
8. Cultural and Creative Arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music and Cultural Activities).

As stated in the National Policy on Education (1998:14) the primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory. Educational services such as library, basic health scheme, counseling etc shall be provided. Teaching shall be by practical, exploratory and experimental methods. In addition, the medium of instruction shall be language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. That advancement from one class to another shall be based on continuous assessment and also the Primary School Leaving Certificate shall be based only on continuous assessment and shall be issued locally by the head teacher of the school. The federal government also promised to discourage the incidence of dropping out at the primary level of education. However, if this occurs, provision shall be made in the context of adult and non-formal education to enable such early leavers to continue with their education.

Problems Faced by Primary Education in Nigeria

Primary school education, like any other institution has a lot of obstacles that hinder it from achieving peak success. These problems are discussed below.

The transfer of primary education from the federal government to the state and local governments has a lot of implications on the smooth running of primary schools. This transfer led to problem of quality control. There is no longer uniformity in some services rendered by the primary institution. For example, the syllabus and textbooks used by pupils in primary one in federal schools may differ from the ones being used in state schools. The quality of teaching staff in both state and federal schools also differs. Federal schools have more qualified teachers. Due to poor funding by the state/local governments, teachers recruited to teach in their schools may not be as highly qualified as those recruited by the federal schools. In addition, the structure/materials used when schools were under the federal government were better than what we have today under the care of the state/local governments. Today, we have dilapidated buildings and worn out materials.

Besides, the problem of quality control, we also have the problem of financing. Primary school teachers were not only paid good salaries while under the federal government, they were also paid on time. Unlike today, the salaries are not paid on time and there is no uniformity in salaries of the state and federal government teaching staff. Every state pays what she can afford. This altitude is greatly contributing to lack of interest from primary school teachers and shortage of teachers. Most teachers today, have divided interest in their work. Some teachers supplement teaching with other trades to make ends meet.

In addition, politicians pose a problem to primary education. The change of baton of power from one political party to another puts a threat to primary education. This leads to changes in education policy, causing educational discrepancies, which lead to conflicts and disunity.

Relevance of Primary Education to Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

Rehabilitation means to restore to rank, privileges, rights etc lost or forfeited, (Collin, 1980). In view of this definition, economic rehabilitation means to restore the economy to good shape.

Self-reliance according to Odozi as postulated by Oriola, (2003), is a policy of generation through

one's own effort, power etc. However, this could be seen as doing something that will generate income in order to survive, without having to rely on white-collar jobs.

Tamuno opined by Ololobou (2003:74) defines self-reliance as a suitable utilization of a nation's human and natural resources to provide a viable national sovereignty in all its facets or ramifications. This brief expository potrays self-reliance as:

- (i) Both individual and collective realization and passion for self-preservation through an independent use of available resources to meet individual and national goals.
- (ii) An attitude that resists oppression, suppression and subjugation of any kind.
- (iii) A way of life, by which formerly colonized nations shun guidance and manipulations and accept the rigours, hazards and challenges of independence, (iv) Emphasizing the human factor in the process of developing.

However, from the above definitions of rehabilitation and self-reliance, one would see that primary education has great prospects for economic growth and development and self-reliance for the recipient and the nation.

One of the objectives of primary education is to inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively. This point has to do with developing the child's speaking, writing, reading and speaking skills. No wonder the National Policy of Education (1998) deems it fit to include the teaching of languages such as English, French and Language of the environment hi the primary school curriculum. Ability for one to communicate well in whatever vocation he finds himself leads to economic growth. Education is wealth. Education is also an investment and a means of human development. As an investment, it is essential for national development and contributes directly to personal fulfillment and the growth of the individual. Numeracy will help the recipient in areas like measurement (if he is a carpenter, tailor, mason) and calculations. Effective communication with clients will boost his trade.

Good science knowledge will provide humanity with the knowledge of the environment and social behaviour that is needed to develop effective solutions to our global development (Bajah, 1995). Therefore, introduction of science at the primary school is necessary because of the rapid changes that are taking place around the globe. The learning of science early in the life of an individual will facilitate the understanding of the natural world and will also develop scientific attitudes early in a child. Scientific and reflective thinking is the foundation of scientific invention. Bill Gates (the famous/richest American) has been engaged in reflective thinking right from his childhood. This has led to breakthroughs in his life.

Furthermore, moulding the character and developing sound attitude and morals in the child is the aspect of education that cannot be over-looked in economic growth and self-reliance of a child. This training is necessary in a child so as to build in the child the morality and responsibility a man owes himself, his family and the society in general. Moral education will mould the recipient of primary education to be a goal-getter (strong-willed person). Strong-will makes one to pursue certain goals. In addition, moral education broadens human understanding so that people can make the best use of their innate potentials for advancement economically or otherwise. Moral and character moulding education for economic and self-reliance, does not only cover formal education, but also includes practical skills and unbiased awareness of one's social and physical environments.

Citizenship education serves as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the individual and the society. The child learns about the rights and responsibilities of a good citizen. This education exposes the recipient to know the loyalty and responsibilities he owes his nation as well as his financial obligation to her. Without citizenship education one becomes a liability. The knowledge of it liberates the recipient and makes him have self-esteem. It makes him a mature person who contributes to the economic development of his nation.

To develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment need'; education as an instrument of change. The recipient of this kind of education will find it difficult to be stagnated economically because he will always be able to find something doing. It makes him to be self-employed thereby changing the notion of young and old graduants leaving the rural areas for the cities in search of white-collar jobs.

Primary school education, in addition, provides the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. Such a child is taught

to become the professional man who will in future help to harness the nation's wealth for: economic development. He is also taught to become self-reliant. Therefore, relevant equipment is" required for the training of the child.

Moreso, primary education gives the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity. This will. develop the child's mental and technical know-how to prepare him for the challenges in the society.-The emergence of highly skilled manpower would surely stimulate economic growth and employment. This will help the individual to begin new forms of enterprise, trade or industry. The. new person here would assume a new role of responsibility and have determination to achieve change for the economic growth of the nation.

In addition, the primary school curriculum should include vocational and technical education. This will satisfy a number of pressing demands economically. However, entrepreneurship education should be incorporated in the primary school curriculum. Entrepreneurship "which is making a living by working for yourself in the words of Afonja cited in Onuegbu (2002:128). Entrepreneurship helps a graduant of primary school to set up a business, thereby becoming self-reliant. Unemployment will be reduced because the businesses set up will help in employing people. Economically, various kinds of taxes paid by workers and businessmen will enhance economic growth of the nation.

Hitherto, information technology education should be included in the primary school curriculum so as to enhance the nation's economy and self-reliance. Apart from the wider coverage on study, types such as Computer and Internet can boost economy. The recipient of the primary education can be self-employed by setting up business centres and Internet cafes. There could be serious and successful business transactions through the Internet reducing cost and delays.

However, all the above cannot be achieved without qualified teachers and necessary teaching aids. Primary school teachers must be highly qualified since this level of education is the anchor of all levels of education. Recruitment of teachers should therefore, be based on merit because it is what a teacher knows that he will give to the child. The government should again supply primary schools with the necessary teaching aids. This will help in their understanding of the concepts being taught.

Conclusion

Primary school education should therefore be properly cared for and sincerely supervised by the Federal and State Governments, since it is the foundation upon which the rest of the education system is built upon. The curriculum should be geared towards economic growth and self-reliance. This will reduce the rate of unemployment and crime cases in our society.

References

- Collin, P. H. (ed) (1980). *The A.U.P. Harrap's Standard Learner's English Dictionary*. London: Harrap Limited.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1998). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: Government Press.
- Nwagwu, N. A. (1976). *U.P.E: Issues, Prospects and Problems*. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation.
- Ololobou, C.O. (2003). Social Studies Education: A Viable Tool for Achieving Self-Reliance in Nigeria. *Knowledge Review* 5 (4).
- Oriola, D. A. (2003). Secretarial Education and Reliance. *Knowledge Review A Multidisciplinary Journal* 1 (5): National Association for the Advancement of Knowledge.
- Orirmdu, F. (2004). *Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria*. Kano: 1. A. Printing Press.

