

# MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR SKILL ACQUISITION

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the nature of Primary School Education as the base for skills acquisition for national development. It looks at the effort of the management of this level of education towards the implementation of the National Policy on Education in skills acquisition for national development. The paper in addition, highlights some problems and prospects in achieving these skills. Recommendations were also presented.

## **Introduction**

Education is the key to national development. It is the only process through which an individual becomes a productive citizen of his country. It is aimed at improving the physical, social, spiritual, economical and moral well being of the individual and the society as well. Thus, the socio-economic development of a country is measured by the level of its educational acquisition.

According to Fafunwa as posited by Edu (2008), education is described as the aggregate of all process by which a child or a young adult develops his abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. While Iredia in Aigbevoile (2008), asserts that education equips the individual pupil to make the most effective use of his resources, that is, his intellectual endowment, physical capacities, sensory equipment, his time, and his income and material possession. On the national level, education gives knowledge about natural resources and how to conserve them as well as their availability and industrial utilities. It engenders productivity of labour through acquisition of skill and enhances high technological changes and innovations for industrial and social efficiency.

Primary education, according to the National Policy on Education (2004) is the education given in an institution to children aged 6 to 11 plus. It is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system. The duration shall be six (6) years. It gave the goals of primary education as thus:

- a) Inculcate permanent literacy and 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) Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- e) 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 within the limits of the child's capacity.
- g) Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

Furthermore, the National Policy on Education (2004) asserted that in pursuance of the goals above the following have to be fulfilled:

- a) Primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory.
- b) Curriculum for primary education shall include:
  - i. Languages: Language of the environment, English, French and Arabic.
  - ii. Mathematics
  - iii. Science

- iv. Physical and Health Education
  - v. Religion Knowledge
  - vi. Agriculture / Home Economics
  - vii. Social Studies and Citizenship Education
  - viii. Cultural & Creative Arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music & Cultural Activities)
  - ix. Computer Education.
- c) Teaching shall be by practical, exploratory and experimental methods.

- curriculum management;
- teacher-pupil ratio;, etc

### **Concept of Skill Acquisition**

The BBC English Dictionary (1992), viewed “skill” as the knowledge and ability that enables one to do something; while “a skill” is a type of work or craft which requires special training and knowledge. It further explained the acquisition of a skill as the process of learning or developing a type of work or craft.

However looking at the primary school curriculum, if properly delivered by the management of the school, as designed by the National Policy on Education, primary school pupils at the completion of their education will definitely acquire skills that will make them useful to themselves and the society at large. Such usefulness could be in the form of continuing with their education, acquiring skills or learning a trade. Knowledge acquired in subjects such as Computer, Music, Cultural and Creative Arts and Agriculture/Home Economics will make primary school graduands skillful and earn a living even if they could not further with their education.

### **Problems of Primary Education for Skill Acquisition**

Although the government has come out with laudable primary education objectives and a comprehensive curriculum, this level of education is faced with many and diverse problems. Some of these problems include:

- Inadequate skilled teaching staff;
- lack of infrastructural facilities;
- lack of funding;

**Inadequate skilled teaching staff:** This is a major problem in our educational system. This is even worse at the primary level where few teachers are made to handle the teaching of some subjects that are not their area of specialty due to lack of teaching staff. This is a problem because at this early stage of the educational system, trained and specialized teachers need to teach these beginners the rudiments necessary for the take-off of education in the lives of these young ones. In addition, teachers are not satisfied in the job; therefore most of these teachers take the job as a second choice because they have no alternative. Igbiwu and Nwaham (2008), stated that teachers leave the field as soon as the opportunity comes, hence there is high mobility of teachers to more profiting jobs.

**The provision of infrastructural facilities** is yet another problem. Primary school pupils are to be taught some skills, which will be useful to them and the society, but the problem is that there are no provision of materials and equipment that will aid the practical acquisition of some of these skills. Computer science is to be taught, but no single computers in majority of these schools. Music ought to be taught too but the facilities are not available, some schools do not even offer it. There are no art rooms in most of our primary school. The materials needed are also absent. Classrooms are also inadequate. Classes are over crowded making learning/learning uncomfortable.

**Funding** is very necessary in the affairs of primary school education but there is lack of money to manage the affairs of this level of education. No funds to employ qualified teachers, purchase books, and other necessary materials. No adequate money to pay teaches too.

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Some states are owing their teachers due to this problem.

**Curriculum management:** Implementation of the primary school curriculum as stated in the National Policy on Education is a problem. The policy stated that the curriculum should be taught theoretically and practically for the acquisition of skills. Most of the teachings at this level of education are done theoretically. The practical aspect, which will make the child a better individual in the society, is neglected. Subjects such as Computer Science, Music and Culture are not even taught practically in most schools.

Furthermore, the instability in government has also affected the management of primary education. This sector has undergone several changes. This does not allow for efficient management and even administration.

**The teacher/pupil ratio** is also a problem to the acquisition of skills at the primary school level. The National Policy on Education stated that teacher/pupil ratio is 1:20. In our primary schools today, the population is growing so fast that in some schools the ratio is 1:50 and above. Theoretical teaching cannot be properly carried out not to even talk of the practical aspect. The pupils are too many in a class that meaningful teaching/learning has failed.

#### **Prospects of Primary Education for Skill Acquisition**

Since primary education is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built, a lot can be done to achieve its laudable objectives. In order to make primary education a haven for the acquisition of skills for the benefit of the primary schools child and the nation, there should be the provision of trained /skilled teachers, adequate fund, practicable curriculum, active management, teacher/pupil ratio and many others.

Primary schools are to be stocked with trained/skilled teachers. This class of teachers will give the pupils the correct teaching. This will also help produce skilled individuals who will be useful to themselves and contribute their quota to the development of our nation.

Adequate funding of primary education determines its success and glory. It further determines the purchase of quality infrastructure and materials needed in the school. However, it will also help in recruiting the necessary number and calibre of teachers needed. Teachers are inevitable in our primary schools. They should therefore be highly intelligent and skillful.

The curriculum designed for primary education by the National Policy on Education is skillful. Teachers are to work hard to see that they give their best to their pupils. Practical aspects of the curriculum should be carried out. This will help build up a skillful citizen.

Primary school management board is necessary to help bring a skillful turn around in our primary schools. Constant supervisions should be carried out by this body on the primary schools. This body is not a fault finder in the lives of the teachers and the pupils but it encourages teachers, the community and the pupils to work hard. The school does not exist in isolation; this body should oversee the affairs of the school and also be a link between the state government and the school.

Meaningful teaching/learning can only take place in a conducive environment. Therefore, facilities needed in primary schools should be provided by the government. The teacher is a single man who can not perform magic to attend to pupils who are above 50. The ratio of 1:20 should be maintained for productive teaching/learning.

#### **Conclusion**

Education is the key to knowledge and development. Abdullahi as cited in Igbiwu (2008), stated that knowledge is the key to

industrialization and by extension, economic development. Therefore, for any development in this nation, our primary schools should be engaged in more practical aspect than only theory. This will help produce skillful citizens who will be self-sufficient even if they could not further in their education.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations should be considered in order to have a skillful primary education:

- The curriculum should include more practical activities such as weaving, dyeing of clothes, ceramic/sculpture, pottery etc. this will produce a useful graduand in the society who can fend for himself and members of his family.
- Teachers' salaries need to be improved and teachers should be paid as when due so as to retain them in their job.
- Teachers posted to rural areas should be given special allowance to attract teachers to such areas.
- The government should see that only qualified NCE teachers teach at the primary school level.
- Every primary school teacher must be computer literate.
- Every primary school teacher, whose area of specialization is not Primary Education Studies, must have at least a certificate in Primary Education Studies.

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