

CHALLENGES FACING IMPLEMENTATION OF BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN HEALTH EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper revealed that basic education for national development should not be perceived as merely the acquisition of literacy or other skills or the preparation of individuals for employment market but for Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. To achieve the Sustainable Development goals via Health Education at Basic Education level, efforts must be made to check those factors that are known to have hindered the success of Health Education at the Basic Education level. This paper specifically considered curriculum issues as one of those factors militating against Health Education at Basic Education as a tool for achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. It was recommended among others that curriculum issues in Basic Education should be tackled in order to achieve sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

Key words: Sustainable Development, Curriculum Issues in Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Health Education Curriculum

Education is an essential instrument for personal and national development. It is based on this importance that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) advocates compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age. This is to fortify children with the academic and basic knowledge that will guide them in life. The ultimate goal of education therefore, is to equip each individual to participate actively in the society. People around the world recognize that current economic development trends are not sustainable and that public awareness, education and training are means to moving society towards sustainability. Ali & Ajibola (2015) stated that Basic Education is a basis for sustainable national development and it can be tailored towards achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

The term “basic” relates to the base, take off point, fundamental, essential, spring board, bottom line, that is required, it therefore shows that basic education is the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge (Amuchie, Asotibe & Christina 2013). This connotes that without basic education, higher education cannot be attained. It therefore suggests that this basic education is mandatory for all citizens. Moreover, Ogboru, Nwonye, Arinze, Okonkwo & Akpojotor (2018) asserted that it is that type of education that can help an individual function effectively in the society. This purports that it is the form of education which is essential for life. In the same vein, Elder & Akenji (2017) reinforced their view. They perceived basic education as the form of education which must equip an individual with necessary skills to survive in his or her environment. Elder & Akenji (2017) posit that basic education is the form of education which must equip an individual with necessary skills to survive in his or her environment. Elder & Akenji (2017) further buttressed that it should be practical and functional education. That is it should be useful and operative.

The idea of “Education” connotes transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. In the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, it is expected that theoretical and practical knowledge are transmitted to learners in simplistic form. This involves starting from the scratch and being able to carry the learners along. According to Anaduaka & Okafor (2013) it is through education that ignorance is eliminated, skills for productivity and leadership acquired and key through which future productivity is acquired. In the same vein, Akinbote (2007) defined education as the process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. It is also the “aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviors which are of positive value to the society in which he lives” (Fafunwa, 1974 cited in Amuchie, Asotibe & Christiana, 2013). Thus, education can be viewed as a process of assisting learners to acquire knowledge, skills and acceptable attitudes and moral behaviours that would make them responsible citizens able to take care of themselves and their families and be more functional in their environment. In other words, education develops an individual to develop his/her environment and ultimately his/her nation from generation to generation.

From the discussion so far, it is obvious that basic education is an evolving programmes of instruction that is intended to provide learners’ with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their economic well-being and that of their families and communities to explore and understand different perspectives and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives.

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is a nine (9) year duration basic educational programme, comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years junior secondary education, which was introduced as a reform measure by the Federal Government aimed at rectifying the existing distortion in the basic (primary and junior secondary) sub-section of Nigeria Education System which include to eradicate illiteracy ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration. This connotes that the UBE programme is an educational programme aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance, poverty in the nation.

The vision statement of UBE is to be “a world class education intervention and regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in Nigeria” (FRN, 2004) while its mission statement is “to operate as an intervention, coordinating and monitoring agency to progressively improved the capacity of states, local government agencies and communities in the provision of unfettered access to high qualitative basic education in Nigeria”. Its scope includes “programmes and initiatives for early childhood care and education, six year primary education and three (3) years of junior secondary education” (FME, 2012), with these objectives; ensure unfettered access to nine (9) years of formal basic education, the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age, reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency, ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and live skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The core values of the UBE curriculum encompass honesty and accountability; integrity and transparency and team work and commitment. Federal Ministry of Education, FME, (2009) defined basic education as “the education offered to children aged between 3 and 14 years. It comprises three years of early childhood care development and education (ECCDE), six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. It also covers special interventions directed at nomadic and migrant children mass literacy as well as the almajiris and other vulnerable and excluded groups.” Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, (2014) asserts that: basic education shall be of 9-year duration comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adult and out of school youths.

The above definition connotes the fact that UBE is a policy reform measure by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria aimed at restructuring the basic

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education sector in the country. The system is structured towards the abolition of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as to incite and hasten national development in country (FRN 2004). To Amuchie, Asotibe and Christina (2013), UBE is the transmission of basic knowledge to all parts of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. It has three main components – Universal, Basic and Education. Universal indicates a programme that is meant for all facets of the society that is, the rich, poor, the physically fit and the disabled, the brilliant fit, the full, the regular students and the drop outs including every other individual that is ready to acquire knowledge. The major objective of the Basic Education is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years.

Sustainable Development

Literarily, development has been defined as the qualitative increase in the output of a nation from all productive sectors of the economy. It is a state in which the various sectors of the economy are operating at full capacity to provide better life for the citizens (Ugwu, 2016). However, sustainable development has to do with human development in which resources are used to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural system and the environment, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generation to come. Sustainable development and therefore be simply explained to mean development that has maximum importance to both the present and future generation according to their needs.

Sustainable development has also been defined in many ways by different scholars but the most popular definition is the one from the World Commission on environment and Development known as (the Brundtland Commission) Report: our common future human development (1987). It defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2012) in Akinsola & Abe (2006) in a very simple term it is the development that stands the test of time. Sustainable development in Nigeria suggests that the overall well-being of the people today, be it economic, environmental, social, political and otherwise be maintained and sustained for the future generation. According to Ugwu (2016) sustainability will be assured when human development index is high. This is measured by people's life span, educational attainment and enrolment ratio (yearly increase in enrolment and standard of living), individuals take care of their basic needs like the need to eat good and healthy meals clothe and shelter themselves, there are employment opportunities for the country's teeming youths in the streets, the population does not outstrip the resources to meet the needs of the population

(needs in terms of health, food, housing, education, security etc), and improvement in the environment conditions or quality renewable and renewable natural resources meets the natural and man-made disasters including conflicts reduced to the barest minimum. These indicators of sustainable development are assured when people become more responsible and responsive to their own needs, empower themselves and increase their skills.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs do not represent the 2030 global agenda in its entirety. They are not a summary agenda, but rather focus on areas necessary to achieve sustainable development. The 17 SDG goals should be seen as indispensable pieces in a big puzzle. In order to truly understand the Agenda, one need to look at the puzzle as a whole, but at the same time it is impossible to complete the puzzle without these pieces. Therefore, SDGs are the pressure point that have the capability to affect the well-being of the entire planet and the people who live on it (Hopkins, Charles & Mckeown; Limited Nations System Staff College, (UNSSC, 2017) because the SDGs are the result of general political debates and individual conferences, they are not accurate, but they represent some of the most urgent and universal needs of the world today. The SDGs help translate the core values and principles underlying the agenda into concrete and measurable results.

Not all goals have the same standing. While some goals appear more overreaching or ‘final’ in nature, others can be seen as ‘means’ to those final goals. For example, we do not only pursue the water and energy goals (SDGs 6 and 7) for their own sake, but because clean water and energy are means to the true goal of health and wellbeing. However, energy and clean water are such crucial issues that they demand specific focus. Comprehensive look at some SDGs as means to others can help us appreciate the inter linkages of the SDGs (UNSSC, 2017).

To the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), sustainable development goals are:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy live and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

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- Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable and economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. It should be noted that the United Nations Framework Convention on climate changes is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Education for Sustainable Development

From previous discussions, education for sustainable development can be described as a lifelong process that leads to an informed and concerned citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and commitment to engage in responsible individual and collaborative actions. Education for sustainable development facilitates people to develop the knowledge, values, and skills to participate in decisions individually and/or collectively, locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life without destroying the planet of the future. In the same vein, UNSSC (2017) coined education for sustainable development as a holistic approach for schools management and the curriculum, not a separate subject. It therefore requires reflection on what to teach, and how to teach in order to:

clarify and extend the ability of students to think for themselves, encourage students to reflect and debate issues to enable them to form their own opinions; and foster learning that emerges from discovery and is relevant to the learner's life experiences.

Concept of Health Education

Historically, health education has been committed to disseminating information and changing human behavior. Following the Alma-Ata Declaration adopted in 1978 in Basavanthappa, (2008) the emphasis has shifted from prevention of disease to promotion of health styles, the modification of individual's behavior to modification of 'social environment' in which the individual lives, community participation to community involvement and promotion to individual and community 'self reliance'.

Nwonye & Ayomah, (2018) defined health education as a process aimed at encouraging people to want to be healthy, to know how to stay healthy, to do what they can individually and collectively to maintain health and seek help when needed. Health education is indispensable in achieving individual and community health. It can help to increase knowledge and to reinforce desired behavior patterns. The information that health education provides enables individuals(s) to make knowledgeable decisions, cope more effectively with alterations in their health and life styles, and assume greater personal responsibility for their health and that of their family and the community at large.

In an era of growing health costs and increasing collaboration between health service providers and consumers, people are increasingly encouraged to share responsibility for their own health maintenance. Health education empowers people by educating them about ways to manage their own health processes more effectively. As lifespan increases, people are more likely to experience the chronic illnesses related to aging that require complex changes in diet, exercise, lifestyle and medical treatments. Health education becomes curtails to the society because of such social changes. The primary purpose of health education is to assist young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. It helps people to achieve health by their own actions and efforts. Health education begins, therefore, with the interest of people to improve their condition of living and aims at developing a sense of responsibility for their own health betterment as individuals, and as members of families, communities or Government.

Since health education has a limited impact when directed from general education; most of the needed information must be integrated into the educational system. The educational objectives are aimed at the learners to be taught in the educational programme. Nwonye & Ayomah (2018) viewed health education as a holistic area of study that derived its content from other field of study like geography, economic, sociology, biology to impart to the learners positive ways of making useful contribution to themselves and to the growth of the society.

From the foregoing, one can tell that health education is all about, hence it can be seen as an integrated field of study which is concerned with changes in knowledge, feelings and behavior of learners thereby effecting change in health practices.

Health Education Curriculum

The basic education curriculum in health education apart from taking into cognizance societal needs has incorporated many of the contemporary issues of local and global concerns such as intervention programmes- school feeding, hand washing, environmental issues, drug abuse, family life, sexuality education, disease prevention and control, safety and first aid education among others. In achieving the integrated nature of health education curriculum in our schools most especially at the basic education level; Nwonye, Arinze & Owoeye (2018) opined that when we plan a health education curriculum for any society, it must take the problem of that society into considerations.

“A healthy nation is a wealthy nation” according to old adage. The universal basic education programme teaches values of health to Nigerian citizens. The knowledge gained or imparted to Nigerians on health issues would help them have access to health services in the country. It is through health education at formal, informal and non formal level imparted to Nigerian citizens that will enable them understand the dangers of some deadly disease such as HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis, degenerative disease, measles, whopping cough and polio. The prevention of these diseases will be for them to get medical attention from health workers. This is national development offered by the UBE program. Chekwube (2014) and Enuzie, Nwonye and Ayomah (2015) stated that the educational progress of a every child depend on good health and that neither teaching non learning can go on effectively in the absence of good health.

Challenges in Basic Education Curriculum Implementation

According to Ezeoba & Okafor (2015) curriculum is a set of materials that include both content instructional guidelines. Putting this curriculum content and instructional guidelines into practice in the classroom is what constitute curriculum implementation. As a nation that believes in using education as a tool for sustainable development, Nigeria Government introduced the technical and vocational education and other emerging issues such as value orientation, peace dialogue, human right education, entrepreneurial skills, family life and HIV/AIDS education into the basic education sector. All these are aimed at laying a firm foundation for developing sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), (2006). However, the

pangs are issues in the basic education curriculum which might be a huge challenge to effective sustainable development in Nigeria. These issues are likely to impede effective implementation of the 9 year basic education scheme such as inadequate finance, inadequate instructional materials, educational infrastructural issues, emergence of technology teachers factors (Ezeoba and Okafor 2015).

Inadequate Finance – According to Mbakwem (2005), all the problems of the education industry in all levels centre on finance. Curriculum implementation exercise involves a lot of money for equipment for both the teacher and the learner. The present comatose state of the national economy has affected budgetary allocations to the educational industry. Money is sine qua non if schools must be run, when all the necessary facilities and equipment for teaching and learning are not adequately provided, effective implementation of the curriculum can hardly be realized.

Instructional Materials – Material resources such as textbooks, films, tapes, monographs, manikin, magazines and poster are critical to the teaching and learning process. The use of these materials in teaching process concretize learning and give life to concepts being taught but these materials are scare in our environment. The available materials are rather difficult to come by and where they are found, they are highly expensive to acquire, putting teachers/learners in a tight corner to actually achieve success (Nwomye, Okonkwo & Ayomah, 2014).

Educational Infrastructure

Educational infrastructure includes all physical facilities needed to make schools function as intended and attain set goals. These include classroom and office blocks, laboratories, furniture, equipment and materials, toilet and water facilities. World Bank (2003) and FME (2009) purported that dearth of these basic school facilities in the basic education sector does not promote a pleasant environment for effective teaching and learning process. Elder (2017) posted that basic education level of education is the introductory stage for acquisition of all types of productive skills at the disposal of the learner, but when the facilities for such purpose are grossly inadequate, it impacts negatively on human resources development. This is in sense that experiences which will lead to unveiling and harnessing human potential and talents are inhibited due to inadequate educational infrastructure.

In addition, it has even become problematic to maintain existing infrastructural facilities in basic school (Amuchie, Asotibe & Christina 2013). This is evident as learners in most basic schools across the country are seen learning in dilapidated buildings, sitting on broken chairs and desks or even on bare floor, and carrying out practical works without the necessary equipment and materials. These conditions are capable of reducing learners' interests in teaching and learning process in and outside

the classroom. Nwonye, Okonkwo and Ayomah (2014) noted that there is an urgent need to provide these facilities in terms of adequacy, appropriateness and gender sensitivity because their use maximizes the benefits from educational programmes.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

As with other levels of education, ICT has been introduced into the basic education programme. This is in recognition of its prominent position and role in advancing knowledge and skills required for effectively functioning in a global village occasioned by modernity in science and technology. The use of ICT has proved very rewarding in teaching and learning processes. (Nwonye, Arinze, Ayomah & Ogboru, 2018).

The computer is one primary device for ICT compliance, but unfortunately, majority of teachers who are to teach computer education to pupils in the basic education programme are themselves illiterates in the field. There is also a dearth or paucity of ICT gadgets, materials and equipment in the basic schools, especially the public ones. Since ICT relies on electricity, unfortunately, its functionality is hampered due to unstable power supply in schools where they may be found. (Nwonye, Arinze, Ayomah & Ogboru, 2018).

Teacher factor

Nnachi (2007) in Ezeoba and Okafor (2015) observed that our primary schools have been plagued by shortage of qualified teachers' undoubtedly the most important factor that determines the quality of education and its contribution to national development is the 'teacher'. It is on the teacher's personal qualities and characters, his/her educational qualities and professional competence that the success of all educational endeavours must ultimately depend. How well or how badly teaching is done is therefore an important factor that determines the quality of education in Nigeria. Nwonye, Okonkwo and Ayomah (2014), maintained that education would be less sensible if there are no quality teachers in the educational system even if adequately planned with surplus budget and abundance of other resources. Poor teacher quality is an impediment to effective curriculum implementation in basic education.

Conclusion

The relationship between education and sustainable development is durable. The theory of the future for sustainable development, may come across relevant development and general support; if people are not educated and do not receive adequate information. Implementation of strategies for sustainable development is a result of the

development of educational curricula. There are efforts to incorporate sustainable development theory in education, not only theoretical concepts but also in practical applications. Sustainable development seeks to foster change. Actually this is the most difficult point. And this is the reason why the vision of sustainable development must be constructed over the way of education because education is the basic tool for change. This change must start from basic education level in Nigeria because it is the base, take off point required for the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge.

Recommendations

- ✓ The theory of sustainable development should be integrated in curricula at all educational levels most especially at the UBE level.
- ✓ Sustainable development should not be treated as a theoretical and conceptual analysis but as practical training.
- ✓ Incorporation of the principles of sustainability cannot be a special subject, but it must be incorporated in all the subjects at the UBE level.
- ✓ Curriculum issues in health education at basic educational level should be tackled in order to achieve sustainable development goals in Nigeria.
- ✓ Government should provide sufficient funds to provide relevant materials for the teaching and learning of health education.

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