A SURVEY OF ISSUES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION DELIVERY OF MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
One of the supposed aims of primary education to be attained at the end of the programme is the development of manpower for economic and sociopolitical needs of the recipient, the immediate and larger society. However, a survey of the contemporary primary education situation indicates multifaceted obstacles towards the realization of this goal. It is in this vein that, the paper traces the historical development of primary education in the country and examines a variety of issues affecting the attainment of primary education's set goals and proffers suggestions.

Introduction
Broadly speaking, the following can be said to be aims of education in general upon which the aims of education at all levels of the Nigerian educational system have been derived and developed, in the process of ensuring human survival. The general aims of education therefore seek among others to enable:

i. The individual to develop his/her potentials.
ii. The individual to take responsibilities for the community.
iii. Perpetuation of the main form of human experience as reflected in the practical training as included in science, mathematics, music, literature and language.

This outline of educational objectives implies that harnessing of human resources for the individual, community and national development at all levels of education especially at primary school level which is regarded as the foundation stage.

The goals and objectives of primary education have therefore themselves become both interesting and challenging in the development of manpower for our national lives. It is interesting because it opens up opportunities for children to develop their potentials to meet up futuristic challenges in the democratic society and dynamic economy of ours. On the other hand, it is challenging because it provides opportunities for children to aspire and attain the best in various human endeavours later in life according to their abilities under the guidance of teachers. It also challenges them to be interested and appreciate especially what many successful and dedicated personalities are doing to improve mankind.

The study of primary education is therefore important for manpower development because it is at this level that whatever knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are relevant for living can be introduced and influenced into the pupils considering their formative years.

Definition of Terms
Primary Education: Primary education is the education given to children in the first six years of formal school. It therefore serves as a foundation; its quality determines the quality of the rest of the educational levels. In fact, primary education is the substructure upon which other educational levels are erected (Adaka & Levi, 2003). Also according to FRN (1998), Section.3 (5) defines primary education as education given in an institution for children aged normally 6-11+ and the rest of educational system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to success or failure of the whole

Manpower Development: According to World Book Encyclopedia, (1999) manpower development implies the training of work force for skills required for available jobs. In other words, manpower development means both conscious and unconscious efforts geared towards harnessing human resources for the purpose of either self actualization of the individual or national development. This would be social, political, economic or technological.
Historical Development of Primary Education

Primary education was brought by the missionaries because of the dual intention of bringing to Nigeria the Christian religion and western education. In this self assigned task, the missionaries were unswerved to any form of compromise. Thus primary education was introduced in the 19th C. with the need not only to educate people who were Christened "Barbarians" but also to develop manpower to perform wider functions in the growing colonial government in subordinate positions like clerks, court messengers and interpreters (Obidi, 1990:45). Therefore primary education curriculum adopted was simply designed to supply the government with competent but subordinate officials. The curriculum content of primary education included subjects like English Language, Arithmetic, Religion, Writing, Dictation, Drawing, and Agriculture. However, emphasis was on Reading, Writing and numeracy skills and singing, (N.T.I, 2000:23).

In Nigeria therefore, the 1st primary school was established by Thomas Birch Freeman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1842 at Badagry. It was after this that due to keen competition and rivalry among the different Christian sects and their desire to outsmart and beat one another in the struggle to win souls for Christ led to the proliferation of schools. For example, church missionary society set up a primary school in 1843, the church of Scotland mission in 1846, the African mission of south Baptist convention (American) in 1850 and Roman Catholic mission in 1860 followed (Omalle, 2000:299).

At the attainment of independence in 1960, the spread of primary education was at different pace amongst the three regions, due to religious differences and priority pursued by each regional government. In 1960, the Western Regional Government set up Banjo Commission to review the existing structure and the working of the primary and secondary school work which the commission recommended among others the cessation of corporal punishment and introduction of free education.

In the Eastern Region, the government in 1958 set-up the Dike Commission to review its educational system. This commission observed that government was spending 1/3 of its revenue on education and therefore suggested a more moderate approach and concentration on quality rather than quantity. This report was not accepted by government. Consequently, it set-up the Ikoku Commission to review the progress of education in the Eastern Region. The commission recommended the following among others; complete government control of primary schools and reduction of the length of primary school education from seven to six.

These two commissions (Dike & Ikoku) reports resulted in the government modifying its primary education plan. The new system was a three year non-fee paying system followed by another three year fee paying system based on assumed local contribution.

While in the Northern Region, emphasis was not on the development of Western education. However, in 1961, the government set-up the Oldham Commission to look into the financial and administrative problems that would arise towards the implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE). This was particularly important because of the recommendation of Ashby Commission which was to look into the possibility of expanding man-power resources of the country. The commission stressed the need to raise primary school enrollment in the North by 25% of the school aged children by 1970. The Oldham Commission gave rise to an education law establishing a partnership between government and voluntary agencies where the government would be a leading partner with the overall responsibility for the promotion of primary education, (NTJ, 2000:104).

In further pursuit of the Ashby Commission Report as published in 1962, the Federal Government decided to depart from the purpose of colonial primary education and re-orientate her education towards her developmental needs of enhancing man-power resources. This was typified in the education policy (1963 & 1977), which the policy finally brought the objectives of primary education to include (Omalle, 2000:301).

i. The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.

II. The laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.

iii. Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to life of the society.

iv. Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes.

v. Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment.

vi. Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity, vii. Providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

These objectives of primary education have been a reflection of the country's national goals, which are based on:
a. A free and democratic society  
b. A just and egalitarian society  
c. A united, strong and self reliant  
d. A great and dynamic economy  
e. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (Aladejana, 1990:33).

The implication of the above stated goals according to FRN (1998) Section. 1 (7d) is the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. In other words, the goals meant to develop the human resources of the country for the sake of the individuals and the nation at large.

While the above stated objectives of primary education is to help develop manpower potentials of the child in the following ways:

i. The mastery of the "3Rs" (i.e. Reading, writing and Arithmetics) provides the basic rudiments which is considered as a pre-requisite for all administrative career opportunities, ii. The acquisition of skills and appreciation of value of work through subjects like Local and Domestic Science can channel their potentials in industrial and scientific areas.

Also for the purpose of manpower development, an appraisal of the objectives of primary education could further reveal the following:

**Developing in the Child the Ability to Adapt to His Changing Environment:** Primary level of education is expected to further help the child to adapt to his changing environment since there are more responsibilities and work to grapple with. The child therefore requires some training to be able to cope with all these changes and more especially in area of economy and technology.

**Giving the Child Opportunities for Developing Manipulative Skills that will Enable Him to Function Effectively in the Society Within the Limits of His Capacity:** When children are allowed to tinker with their environment especially at this formative stage, they acquire skills that if properly harnessed could help them throughout life. The primary education is therefore expected to through various activities provide the child with the right environment for developing the ability to manipulate his environment.

**Purposes of Primary Education**

The purpose of primary education reflects a variety of opinions as it affords the child opportunity for self actualization and happiness, and the nation to explore and exploit the available manpower resources for national development in diverse areas. NTI (2000:33) opines that the purposes of primary education are desirable and valuable outcomes of primary education. They are desirable and valuable because sound primary education should help children develop acceptable competencies in basic knowledge and skills that can lead to individuals developing according to their abilities.

Another purpose of primary education is to cope with the dynamic society of ours since individuals can function in a changing society. For example, during the colonial era, the aim of primary education was to develop manpower, which could read and write, and become interpreters, catechists, and court messengers. This purpose could not serve the country after independence. Therefore, the need to expand manpower though primary education became higher.

Also since the child is an integral member of his society, the purpose of primary education should reflect his persona-social needs. All knowledge, skills, attitudes and values he acquires should relate to various areas of manpower needs of his environment, so the educated person should be able to apply knowledge and skills acquired appropriately in different situations where there is the need.

**Issues in Primary Education Vis-A-Vis Manpower Development**

As lofty as the above stated objectives of primary education appear may not be achieved in the delivery of manpower development because of interwoven issues facing primary education. Nzeagwu and Nzeagwu (2000:49) observe rightly the deteriorated state of primary education vis-a-vis the wide spread belief that primary education is the main formal delivery system for basic education of the child outside the family which is a vital component of manpower development of every nation and her citizenry. In the light of the above, the following are the major issues in primary education affecting its productivity.
1. Government Faithfulness Towards the Objectives of Primary Education: The objectives of primary education as stated in the National Policy on Education represent a future statement about expected outcome of attending primary education. The question at this juncture is how religiously has government been implementing these provisions of the policy? In answering this question, the following provision will be briefly looked upon.

- **Education Support Services:** These support services include; school libraries which a walk round could prove that most (if not none) primary schools do not have libraries. The National Educational Center, Kaduna that is charged with the responsibility of developing and making available instructional media to schools is still not practicable. The issue of National Health scheme is still much on paper, (Betiang, 2001:54). The most pertinent among all these services that is directly related to manpower development is guidance and counseling. According to NTI (2000:96) guidance aims and principles are concerned with helping the individual to become all that he is capable of becoming. It is in view of this that the policy in section 9 (89 i) emphasizes the role of guidance in manpower development and in service training of personnel. Unfortunately not much has been done in this regard.

2. Funding: The problem of whose responsibility it is to fund the system has always evoked a situation where everybody expects somebody else to fund the system. For example, Betiang (2001:55) points out that, in 1988 the funding of primary education was under Federal government, and between 1989 and now, the funding of the system has moved from Federal government to Local governments, from local governments to state governments, from state governments to Federal government and back to Local government several times. This rivalry and confusion is unhealthy for consistency that is required for primary education to develop the desired manpower for the country. Though, government welcomes individuals and group contributions to education at all levels.

3. Accessibility to Primary Education; A lot of factors are militating against the acquisition of primary education. Suffice it to say that economic factor has had a great limiting factor over many children who would have otherwise benefited from primary education. Also children from disadvantaged circumstances and religious norms. For example, in the far Northern part of the country where Islamic and Arabic education predated, western type of education is still viewed as a way of christianizing and propagating western ideas which pollutes the minds of their children against their culture and religion. (Adaka and Tyoden, 2003:107) Geographical factor also play an important part. In the Northern Nigeria, where we have nomadic Fulanis who are always on the move rearing cattle. In the south, particularly in the Niger Delta region, similar problem abound, since the people are always on the high seas, fishing is a problem. The case of Igbo traders' children is not an exception in this regard. They move with their families. These pose a problem for children who have to settle down for 6 years primary education. Children of full time farmers also have problem with primary education. During the intensive periods of planting and harvesting, parents often withdraw their children from schools. The setting up of Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) is a welcome opportunity for nomads to benefit from primary education. Though this innovation is still at its embryonic stage therefore having its objectives unrealizable. (ATI, 2000:100).

4. The Teacher Factor: Prior to 1976, primary school teachers were known to be responsive and committed to their duty and were highly respected within the community they work. Their main pre occupation was the development of the total personality of pupils. (Agana, 2002:57). Teachers then were punctual and regular to school and class, they were resourceful and improvised instructional materials. Their relationship with pupils was of mutual respect. They were so close and free with their pupils, to an extent that when a pupil was ill or for some other reason could not come to school, the teacher finds time to visit him/her. Though at this time, the acceptance and awareness for western education was low, the teachers' conduct in the community made them acceptable and respected. At this point in time, teachers' entitlements were promptly settled. Teachers' employment and promotion were based on merit. Transfer of teachers and appointment of head teachers were not politically motivated.

The story is quite different today, government herself is quite non-chalant about teacher training and teachers' welfare. Due to this neglect, teachers today are neck-deep in petty trading, sale of textile materials and other items even during office hours. Some are tailors, bricklayers and others using motor
cycles for commercial transport (they go by cheap names like Going, Okada, Achaba, Hire etc). This has made their esteemed status so low that some do not even wish to be identified as teachers at occasions. The attitude of government, community and the teacher himself is so demoralizing that retard efficiency and effectiveness of manpower development since the teachers take no time to research and plan what to teach the following day.

5. **Relevance of Curriculum:** Before independence the aim of primary education was targeted at meeting the manpower needs of the growing colonial government. At independence it was realized that manpower development was inadequate and had to be expanded. This was dependent on a change in curriculum of primary education. It is regrettable that the curriculum upon which the development of manpower depends has not been re-orientated to be tailored towards the development of manpower in the existing areas of need. It is in this vein that Adaka (2002:11) alleges the fear that the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is on course but the curriculum upon which its success lies has not been changed to relate what is learned to life after school. In other words, the present primary school curriculum is still bookish and tailored towards the development of manpower towards the non-existing white collar jobs.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made in order to reposition primary education in the delivery of man-power development:

1. Primary schools should de-emphasize the memorization and rote learning of facts. This is affecting quality of their children's performance. They should encourage to learn through practical, exploratory and experimental methods.
2. If the objectives of primary education of developing man power is to achieved, counsellors have to be trained and deployed to all primary schools as a matter of urgency.
3. Mobile primary schools should be established and funded in such a way that it would become a common feature for children from disadvantaged circumstances highlighted above.
4. The curriculum upon which the success of primary education depends should be changed and gears towards the development of man power according to the existing career opportunities.
5. The teachers upon which the success of primary education depends should be rededicated and both the government and the public should accord teachers their rightful place in society.

**Conclusion**

The acquisition of basic education via primary education has been established as a prerequisite skill for venturing into any career. Primary school has therefore been, identified as a vehicle of developing man-power by its provision of basic rudimentary skills. However, in discharging this crucial task, the system is faced with problems which under play the delivery of the dream objective.

**References**


NTI (2000); Pivotal Teacher Training Programme for UBE (Course Book on Education, Modules 1-4), Kaduna.


