

RE-ENGINEERING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: SEXUALITY EDUCATION AS IT AFFECTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This paper addressed the issue of secondary education in Nigeria as regards the effects of sexuality education on academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. Are students in secondary schools in Nigeria well prepared to effectively pursue their education with a desire to achieve high academic standard? What are the challenges that face secondary education in Nigeria? It is against this backdrop that this paper reviews literature on the effects of sexuality education on academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. This is aimed at highlighting the basic gaps which pose major challenges in the teaching and learning processes in secondary schools. Furthermore, this paper made some recommendations on how academic performance of secondary school students will be improved upon. In this paper, sexuality education will be used as a good vehicle to pilot the education of secondary school students with a view to achieving high academic standards.

Education can simply be defined as activities that impact knowledge acquired by learning and instruction. Education is from the Latin word “educate” which means to lead to, to bring up and to elevate (Idowu 2002, Fagbemi 2002, Amaele 2003). Education helps to bring growth and development of the individual and the society through its services. It is instruction directed to improve critical life and social skills including, decision making, critical analysis and systematic judgement abilities (Mangier, 2005). Above all, education is a necessity and it helps to equip the learner in all aspects of life (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2004).

In Nigeria, Secondary education is a very important aspect of Nigerian educational system under the 6-3-3-4 system. Secondary education is held in high esteem because of its nature, objectives and its importance to the individual and the society at large. Based on this fact above, the government in realization of the importance of secondary education, expressed their concern through the inclusion of secondary education in the National Policy on Education. The aims of this segment of education are clearly stated in the National Policy on Education revised 2004 (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2004). The aims are as follows; preparation for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education, while the specific objectives are to:-

- i) Provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity for education of a higher quality, in respective of sex, or social, religious and ethnic background.
- ii) Diversify its curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course.
- iii) Equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology.
- iv) Develop and project Nigerian culture, art and language as well as the world’s cultural heritage.
- v) Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and appreciate those values specified under our broad national aims, and live as good citizens.
- vi) Foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- vii) Inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self improvement both at school and in later life (FRN, 1998)

According to (Oshin 2006) formal education is a conventional system of education organized in schools right from the basics and it included secondary education as one of the levels. He added that the system was organized with rules and regulations formulated and reinforced by the ministries

of education at both federal and state levels. The educational system as regards secondary education has since grown steadily and recently, has been facing some challenges which includes among others, the low academic performance of students, the total realisation of the aims of secondary education problem of having qualified and effective human resources in the teaching/learning process, the problem of cultism, drug abuse, truancy, sexual behavior problem such as teenage pregnancy, provision of necessary infrastructure that can make teaching and learning friendly, examination malpractice, turning out secondary school students that can defend their certificates and school drop out problem. Onoja and Daniel while speaking with Newswatch lamented on the poor state of education in Nigeria (Newswatch 2011). According to Anthonia Baduku, a teacher at the Kaduna State University. If you want to really assess the educational system, you should first of all look at the quality of teachers themselves. Do they really have what it takes to teach?

These challenges need to be addressed because of its adverse effects on the students at the secondary school level and the society as a whole. The identification of these challenges that face secondary education in Nigeria is very necessary, since it will also help in the suggestion of the ways of overcoming them so that the secondary level of education in the Nigerian educational system will be placed on a sound footing for the accomplishment of the millennium development goals as regards productivity and empowerment. In this paper, the effect of sexuality education on academic performance will be addressed and recommendations proffered.

Secondary Education in Nigeria

Secondary education refers to the next stage of education after primary education. Once the primary education stage is over, the students becomes delighted and opportuned to move into the secondary level of education. The all important secondary education has been the concern of the government in terms of quality control and the achievement of the goals of secondary education. The government has tried to promote it by including it in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004) where many important issues concerning secondary education were addressed. These includes among others, the issue of quality teachers to teach at the secondary level, the curriculum contents, the goals, the objectives, the duration and other important issues that can make for a better teaching/learning process and outcome in the secondary schools (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2004). Technically speaking, secondary education is defined as the formal education for children between the ages of 13 to 18 years. In Nigeria, after the primary school education, then the next level is the secondary level of education. It comprises of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS).

According to Obanya (1983) while suggesting solutions on the type of training required for junior secondary school suggested among others, training programme that emphasize a deep rooted theoretical and applied knowledge of adolescents psychology and the organization of out of class learning activities for the teachers. The definition of secondary education may not be more than just a ladder that children have to climb in order to reach the top, a personality development programme should also be recognized as another added bonus.

Recently in Nigeria, due to falling economy, more and more children dropped out of school while some are deprived of higher education. Secondary education should be able to provide enough opportunities to these children, to enable them support themselves, their families and at the same time contribute. In this regard, the classroom teacher teaching at the secondary school shared an element of educational psychology to enable them handle these problem that confronts the students at the secondary school level. He should also have elements of technology so as to prepare the students to cope with the problems of empowerment and productivity as it affects them. Above all, it will help the teacher for effective classroom management (Ogunlede, 1999).

Secondary education in Nigeria is facing some challenges, especially that of low academic performance. These challenges ranges from school to school, State to State and Local government to Local government. Another challenge facing secondary education is that of inadequate staff, poor infrastructure and poor monitoring of the performance of teachers. Government is solely responsible

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for this mess we find in our educational system because it has failed to address the welfare of teachers, hence they take teaching job as part time job, while they at the same secure other part time jobs to make ends meet financially. According to Elechi and Fayemi, these challenges are not insurmountable (Newswatch 2011) hence the need for this paper is to address these challenges.

Majority of the students are not serious with their studies, they want to get the certificate through foul means such as examination malpractice. The death of quality teachers is another major problem facing secondary education. This paper is interested in the academic performance of secondary school students today. In Nigeria, secondary education is an all important level of education that cannot be skipped at all while ascending the ladder to higher education. This explains why it is an issue of great concern for the individuals in the society, the government and the nation to take care of the challenges of secondary education and move it forward and at all cost.

Secondary education is the level where adolescents are found in schools. The adolescent stage is a period of storm and stress, full of confusion and stress that adversely affect academic performance. Here, a lot of developmental changes take place in the adolescents thereby affecting many aspects of their life. Sexuality education is expected to be taught in the secondary schools so as to take care of some of the factors that affect academic performance in school (Makinde 2004).

Sexuality Education and Its Effects on Academic Performance

Sexuality education is the process of enlightening the adolescents about the changes that take place in him/her during the period of rapid growth in weight and height. In addition, it is the process of enlightening the child about the dangers attached to each stage of life if caution is not taken (Makinde 2004).

Academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or down on paper subjectively. Furthermore, academic performance refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. Academic performance fulfill a number of purposes, if has to do with achievement and failures. Results provide a framework for talking about how students fared in schools and a constant standard for which students are held. Academic performance in secondary schools is evaluated in a number of ways. This helps to give an insight into the factors that has affected their results. Academic performance of secondary school students is affected by sexuality education among others range of factors which will be examined in this paper. Sexuality education can affect academic performance in the following ways;

Health Factor

Sexuality education will help students to enjoy good health. By so doing, a healthy student will be in a state of sound health to attend classes, read his books, work hard and have success in his/her academic work. Recently, several research studies have shown that healthy teens generally do better in school than their less healthy peers (CDC 2010, CDC 2010, Basch 2010, CDC 2009). Teens may have little control over some factors such as chronic illness that may contribute to their poor health. However, when armed with accurate information and skills, teens can eliminate other factors that threaten their health in school. Most especially health education including comprehensive sex education provides adolescents with the information and skill they need to know about and manage many health risks such as unintended pregnancy as well as most Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) (CDC 2010, CDC 2010, Basch 2010, CDC 2009). Students' healthy behaviour and good grades are linked. According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, students with higher grades are less likely to engage in health risk behaviour than their classmates who engage in health risk behaviours.

In addition, sexuality education helps to keep students healthy, by so doing, they help students get higher grades and attain academic goals. Students who are involved in pregnancy or experience STI or HIV/AIDS face major obstacles to academic success. Through sexuality education, schools are afforded the opportunity to help students avoid these negative outcomes. Comprehensive sexuality

education helps students to protect their sexual health, avoid these negative outcomes and help to enhance their academic achievement/performance (Gnoly, MCS, & Sue Alford 2010).

Behaviour of Students

The behaviour of students in terms of their attitude towards sexual behaviour can affect their academic performance. Students who are fully informed about good behaviour that excludes sexual misbehaviour will do better at school than those who engage in sexual misbehaviour such as incest, rape, sexual misconduct, sex abuse, homosexuality, sex offences, sex escapades, teenage pregnancies (Fabiye 1995, Ndu 2000, Adedipo 2000, Nnachi 2003).

Information

Through sexuality education, secondary school students will become fully informed of the dangers attached to any sexual behaviour problems that they are found guilty of hence, they will see reason why they should face their studies so as to make good results within the school and at their certificate examination.

Sexuality education makes students to postpone sexual activity until when they are ready to marry. Sexuality education will expose the secondary school students to the truth so that they will not be deceived by their friends, peers or the opposite sex into engaging in sexual activity at an unripe age (Makinde 2004).

It will Make Students Focused and Determined to Succeed Academically

Sexuality education makes students to be focused and determined to succeed in life. This very fact makes the students to concentrate fully in their academic pursuit thereby making them to excel academically. Sexual intimacy is a part of many students' lives, but students who do not engage in sexual activity performs better.

Reinforcement of Positive Behaviour

Sexuality education helps to reinforce positive behaviour and assist students to avoid negative ones. For instance, sexuality/health programmes have been proven to help young people increase their physical activity and reduce tobacco use which affects academic performance for students who participate in it. Dilley (2009), Society for State Directors of Health, Physical education and Recreation (SDHPR).

Sexuality Education Takes Care of Sexual Behaviour Problems:

Through sexuality education, sexual behaviour problems can be reduced if not totally eradicated, for instance, students who are sexually active through sexuality education may then see reasons why they should desist from these sexual misbehaviour and face their studies. Through sexuality education, students can authoritatively, maturedly, decisively, convincingly and boldly handle sexual behaviour problems. Students who postpone sexual activity to a matured age performs better at school. This is one of the good roles that sexuality education plays in the life of students.

Sexuality Education Helps Students to Live a Fulfilled Life:

It makes them to be able to assess themselves economically, socially, psychologically, emotionally discover whether they are matured enough to become involved in heterosexual activities/relationships (Makinde 2004, Okafor 2001). When students are finally informed of the benefits of sexuality education, their academic performance will have a face lift. This is based on the fact that through sexuality education, they have learnt among others about the rudiments of conception, hormones, sexually transmitted diseases, understand the implication of menses, sexual urge, orgasm, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) (Basch 2010, Okafor 2001, Makinde 2004).

Conclusion

Secondary education is an important level of education in the Nigerian educational system hence it cannot be ignored. The National Policy on Education (NPE) has taken bold steps towards ensuring that secondary education receives adequate attention for the production of students for academic excellence and empowerment in the system. This was made evident with the inclusion of secondary education in the National Policy on Education with specifications on what the secondary education would be in Nigeria. The compulsory assignment before all educators is therefore that of re-engineering secondary education so as to ensure proper restoration of public trust in the ability to meet the demands of secondary education from the school and government respectively. This will help in the achievement of productivity and empowerment through improved academic performance. Furthermore, it will go a long way to instill confidence in the students about the benefits of sexuality education to the secondary school students in general and to the adolescents in particular.

Recommendations

In order to move secondary education in Nigeria forward, it is recommended that; Government should do everything as regards the funding, provision of necessary infrastructure, provision of professionally trained teachers to teach in the secondary schools, organization of workshops, seminars and programmes that will encourage academic excellence among secondary school students. In addition, there should be proper monitoring of the teachers and students by Principals and appropriate authorities.

Guidance and counseling services should be functional in secondary schools to check the poor academic performance of students, and help in the choice of career. The guidance counselors should be made to function on full time basis as specified in the National Policy on Education. Schools should be fenced for a better control of the students because there are many openings through which the girls could easily slip away without permission.

Government should employ qualified teachers, provide the necessary infrastructure, fund secondary schools, pay the teachers well and monitor the performance of teachers through proper and serious inspectorate mechanisms devoid of favouritism to any teacher who is found unproductive.

Parents, teachers and all stakeholders of secondary education should also perform their duty of encouraging, monitoring and motivating the students for a better academic performance.

Attitude of parents, teachers, students and the community should change positively towards sexuality education so as to enable them enjoy the benefits of sexuality education.

Sexuality education should be taught in schools to help in proper upbringing of our youths.

The researcher is optimistic that if these recommendations are given the right attention, the problem of low academic performance of secondary school students will effectively be eliminated.

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