

TRANSFORMATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA: THE PRACTICAL REALITY

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Abstract

Providing a child with practical skills gives him the courage to face lifelong challenge of Adulthood. This paper examines the child developmental theories, the primary education curriculum, its content for the achievement of the goals of Nigeria education. The emphasis in this paper is focused on the preparation of children to develop skills. For different vocations and being able to apply the knowledge gained to the various jobs either in school or after. The present curriculum in schools which enables the child to depend on white collar jobs later in life is opposed. Importance is directed towards encouraging the practice of individual skill for self employment for children in the primary schools.

The Nigerian society and environment is bound by certain cultures and the Nigerian child is born into this cultural environment that requires him to contribute to it. In the process of life children find it easy and interesting in watching and copying adults as they work. Most times they emulate adults and their work responsibilities as they play and this shows the need to develop a child while he/she is still in school giving that sense of responsibility, dedication and self reliance. In developed countries around the world like, United States of America have adopted it into their culture to create job opportunities for children during holidays i.e (vacation jobs) to keep them busy. Involving them in competitive sports, dancing and singing. Children movies and less muscle straining jobs with meaningful remunerations for children. It should be noted that this sort of engagement of children is not a kind of child abuse but to fortify and develop them equally. Some recent psychologist have come out with very great vocational discovery about the nature of children and their working capabilities. Children while imitating adults develop their required responsibilities for adulthood. If primary school pupils are properly prepared for life challenges and equip them with various skills, the quest for lack of manpower will not arise. This aspect should be taken care of in the curriculum and make sure that adequate teachers are being recruited in the various fields. It will facilitate the development of the children while in school. Primary

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school level should serve as a preparatory ground for the development of skills in different vocation and be able to apply the knowledge gained to jobs while in school. This will enhance their ability to face various life challenges as they mature into adulthood.

Therefore through this medium the child is equipped to acquire skills for self employment, self productivity and sustenance as it please him/her, with this he creates employment and recruits others when the need arises. He becomes self sufficient, available, confident and self reliant.

Who is a Primary School Child?

The FRN (2004) sees the primary school child as that individual of the ages 6-11 yrs and who is enrolled into the primary school for education. Wikipedia (2012) described the primary school child from Jean Piaget's theory of child development as that human entity that grows and learns by stages of cognitive development. The child referred to here is naturally developed through various stages till he reaches stability in behaviour in order to enable him carry on with adult abilities. The various activities of the child's developmental stages ushers him into adulthood and this should extend beyond psychological specifications.

Kohlberg, Skinner and Pavlov, who are human development psychologists, emphasized reinforcement for good behaviours. Reinforcement is always predominant in the primary school level as it is a training ground. The child regards any form of remuneration as reinforcement be it wages, salaries and allowances for one to get any of these mentioned above, one has to do some work. In the same way a child gets some reinforcement when a good behaviour is exhibited, this could be expressed through being honest, running an errand, helping in domestic chores, splitting of firewood, farming etc, while in school he could win prizes for working hard as a monitor, (making) good grades, good self conduct or one form of performance or another. It is the duty of the adults on teachers in the school to expose the child to societal practices that depicts respect for human dignity and protects rights as this will enhance their character. There is the need to make the child realize that serious work and reinforcement at specific times is tied up with the concept of survival. One need to work hard in order to survive, one must acquire skills to survive rather than look for other means of making quick money to survive. Militancy for e.g. "Boko haram" or kidnapping and street robbery does not yield any accepted end, rather it earns disaster to your life as it is the case in the present dispensation.

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It is expected that before a child completes the primary education he/she would have acquired a stable character and some skills to adjust to changes and challenges in life. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) states that one of the objectives of Primary Education include 'developing in the child the ability to adapt to the child's primary environment.' The child's primary education development creates room for this change and should be used judiciously by the stake holders.

The School Curriculum as it Affects Choice of Career

There are many options from which the children can choose their career and these options have areas of specialization which could be classified into three domains. These are services for government employment, for private employment and for self employment. The primary school curriculum should be specified and be able to prepare the children to fit into these three areas of employment. The primary school curriculum specified subjects that should teach the child about the different kinds of vocations and skills required, for the various profession. Several times the child in the primary school has difficulty in selecting from the group of careers he/she has information about.

If time is taken to check the text books they use in the primary school both in some of the subject, it does not provide the opportunity for the child to acquire skills needed for life after school. The child has a good knowledge of different kinds of jobs and work options, probably through the occupation of the parents and other people around; the child equally observes that life is filled with struggles. It is the struggle that put food on the table, pays his school fees, buy clothing for him and pays other bill that the parents may have incurred. Therefore the basic primary education should arouse his interest and aid him choose a career that will prepare him properly for the requirements for employment in the three areas. The curriculum for primary school lay much emphasis on letter grade knowledge and is over crowded with subjects that directs toward acquiring bookish knowledge. The type of knowledge they are exposed to does not give them the opportunity to acquire and apply the skills for survival after schooling.

Opportunity is not given to the children to build up their science project. Teachers should gear them to produce contain projects scientifically, under their supervision. Creative art is there where they can be given opportunity to develop their interest in Fine Art. In this subject the children can produce a lot of projects that could help them in later life. Home Economic could be given a wide attention in the primary school as it could create opportunity for self employment. In Nigeria presently where the economic is in a battered condition, children could be encouraged to be interested in vocations like hair dressing, tailoring, teaching, soap making, mechanics, shoe making etc as these are areas where self employment is reached easily. It is pertinent to note

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that everybody cannot be a Doctor, and Engineer or a Lawyer. The children should be made to know that there are other areas of vocation that can help to offer employment.

The education provided for the children, in the primary school does not prepare them for further responsibilities. They depend much on their parents and the government to provide everything for them. Every child should be made to understand that parental and government help is not available all the times and that he needs to be exposed to the other spheres of life in the society; for example, job choice, self developing skills, cultural values and activities for self sustenance in the near future. The primary school child should be engaged in practicing basic skills of all vocations at their level of understanding. Children are good followers, when they are engaged in skills like sports, farming, cooking, singing and dancing, they will be dedicated and at each engagement, they should be given remuneration or gifts to enhance their interests. Furthermore, the child in the Nigeria Society is saddled with working for his parents, members of the extended family, both family and friends. He does little petty jobs in other to earn some money. At times, after involving himself in the errand gets abuses, scolding and beating either because the job is not well done. In the near future if this child becomes an adult and cannot rely on the education acquire from primary school for self reliance and productive, he becomes a threat to his family and the society at large.

Moore (2011) supports the opinion that He primary school curriculum must educate the child to acquire both essential skills including communication team-working and project management if children are to achieve their full career potentials. A child should be made to understand that being a medical Doctor does not prevent him from acquiring and using the skill of tailoring or drawing as a Fine Artist.

The curriculum should make a child realize that a lawyer can be a hair dresser or furniture maker. The child should be made to realize that acquiring the knowledge of Nursing should not deprive you from being a hair dresser or a fashion designer or a movie actor. An individual should not concentrate on one vocation; otherwise he will keep waiting until such jobs are available. This kind of situation generates the complain or no manpower because the skills are not available in the people present. The skills gained from primary education should prepare a child to exhibit readiness to fit in for all vocations particularly the compulsory vocations as to gain government, private and self employment.

Delegation of Jobs to Children

Heskin (2011) support the opinion that no matter how much children should be involved in jobs, they should be protected from jobs which place one child in a “power

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position” over others one character that children possess is, over possessiveness, self centered, attitude and bragging; so placing a child in position of authority like monitors, line leaders or snack distributor in the class can easily lead to quarreling, fighting, bragging abuses of power. Though these kind of jobs could be used to monitor the type of character that is embedded in a child and this could be used as a source for correcting the child. This aspect is important because in the course of employment whether self employment or government employment, the individual will interact with others in society; therefore certain excess has to be curbed.

The Role of the School in Preparing the Child for Work

There is the need for the school management to include practical activities in her line up of programmes in the school. Activities that will enable the child to acquire skills and practice it for further productivity. Schools should involve the children in regular practical presentation of skills not just quiz, debates and drama shows but in science oriented projects that ginger the children to be interested in programmes like arts exhibitions, Home Economic programmes, soap making, etc these are areas of exceptional skills. In the school, routine jobs are created by the school management in order to teach children how to plan and be responsible by offering them the chance to take care of their own physical space and classroom procedures. Sharing jobs between more than one child provides negotiation and group planning, for example clean up and classroom maintenance jobs might include straighten paper supplies, sort recycling, testing and supplies out dead makes and give sticks, sharpening dull pencils, wiping down tables with wipes, sweeping, trash check, liberation, wiping board, placing the toys properly, and checking any other that needs attention. There must be proper assurance that all jobs assigned to children are safe according to their age limits. This assignment creates room for them to be responsible in life.

Anderson & Thiede, (2008) opined that procedural jobs might include tallying the number of kids buying lunch and reporting absences, updating the calendar or other related tasks (counting which day of school, day of week etc) reporting on the weather for the day, answering the classroom phone when it rings, handing out work materials and more. Other ideas of jobs to enrich the classroom may include watering plants, picking of weeds in the school farm, reader of the day, arrangins a healthy snack, checking the food vendors and the kind of food they brought, ensuring that children move into their class after breakfast period and more.

However, Redford (2011) opined that for many jobs, it might make sense to assign two or more children to the same responsibility and there will be creation of division of Labour. It also made the job manageable. Children with shared jobs will be

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able to plan how and when they will do it. They will be sure that everyone involved so that the responsibility given to them will be fulfilled. Shared jobs can offer children the opportunity to experience that act of planning, organization and negotiation including conflict resolutions. In this aspect of training discussions of fairness, trustworthiness, responsibility and class citizenship can be involved.

Implications

The absence of the modification of curriculum could have some implications:

1. Increase of not required but skilled manpower in the labour market.
2. Frustration of youths who make up the number of the larger society
3. Non democratic, non egalitarian, disunited, strong but dependent nation
4. Non dynamic economy
5. Limited opportunity for most citizens due to limited child curriculum.
6. There will be poor implantation of government policies

Conclusion

FRN (2004) states that education in Nigeria should 'foster the worth and development of the individual' for the sake of that individual and the society, but the philosophy of education in Nigeria concentrates more on the sector for national development. The primary school education received in this country Nigeria does not intend to accomplish this policy, in that a child is appraised and rated by the quality eloquence he/she can express, being able to win price and gifts as a result of his intellectual abilities. This child graduates by this preparation from the primary level to the secondary level thorough university fully paper qualified with no practical skills to contribute to neither himself nor the development of his country. As this child must survive so he opts for the most immediate and ready means of livelihood which is, employment crime, corruption and survival by force. These experiences have been signaling warning bells all over the years but seemed to be ignored. The point being made here is that the Nigerian child should be busy, equipped and well occupied from the primary school with more life sustaining activities and less theory. Qualified teachers should be employed and supervised to carry out their duties in this formative level.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the re-defining of primary education for the child's self reliance and productivity.

1. A child should be prepared in life to acquire skills and be versatile in various vocations.

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2. The Nigerian child if kept practically busy in school will keep away from crime.
3. Parents should discourage their children from hawking in the streets and going for baby-sitting as this attracts child abuse.
4. Schools should encourage the children to do hand works themselves such as brooms, fibres, knitting and clay work.
5. Provision should be made for the promotion of culture which trains the child through vast vocations and self reliance.
6. The primary education should introduce the child to activities in the formal environment that would encourage him take responsibilities in preparation for adulthood.
7. The curriculum should be modified. Laying more emphasis on practical application of knowledge, skills and insight rather than on speaking, writing and talking. This will definitely reduce the interest on paper qualification.

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