

## **EDUCATING THE NIGERIAN CHILD AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY**

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### **Abstract**

Educating a Nigerian child at early stage of primary education is very necessary for the proper upbringing of the child. The failure or success depends so much on how the whole thing was started. Much has been said about the falling standard of education in Nigeria as well as moral training. Incidentally, this accounts for poor foundation. This paper examines the roles and responsibilities of the family and community in educating the Nigerian child. The roles of the school, as being the instigator of social change is in a better position of reshaping the character of an individual so that he would not be a social misfit in the society. UNICEF on the other hand, has played a decisive role in rendering assistance to the Nigerian educational sector over the years. This is commendable indeed. The paper observes that lack of proper training of the Nigerian child has been responsible for the collapse of moral, social and cultural values.

### **Introduction**

Generally speaking, education is a basic human right, vital to personal and societal development and well being. Educators and professionals across the disciplines realize that the early years of a child are formative. What happens during early childhood has profound consequences not only for his later life as an adult, but also the society at large. Primary Education as defined by the National policy on Education 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

(2004) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The duration shall be six years.

The goals of Primary Education are to:

- 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.

Early years child's education is the rudiment of education a child must first of all receive at home and the next stage is the school and lastly, the society or community. However, as the child stays longer with the parents than the school, parents should endeavour to train a child very well.

#### **The Roles of the Family**

In contemporary society as we have today, the roles of the family in educating a child have become so compounded. This is as a result of the disruptive influence of foreign electronic media.

Some of the roles of the family in educating a child include:

1. Moral training
2. Cultural values
3. Intellectual development
4. Social development etc.

➤ **Moral training:** This aspect of education is very important and for that reason, parents should be very serious in giving proper moral instruction to their children e.g respect for elders.

➤ **Cultural values:** The family and the society should all join hands together in inculcating sound Nigerian cultural values in their children. Much of what is written and said about Nigerian culture takes a backward look in an attempt to recapture something which otherwise may become lost. The impression is sometimes given that a golden age has somehow gone or given way to modern western culture and values.

➤ **Intellectual development:** This has to do with the socio-economic status of the family background. In some Nigerian homes, children from poor families usually get inadequate intellectual development. In other words, what we are saying is that they are not properly informed, but in an ideal situation, if a child comes from the elite class, the upbringing is always different.

➤ **Social development:** The child needs to interact with others for example, peer groups so as to socialize himself in the proper manner. The child should be taught how to respect elders and those in position of authority. This will go a long way to

make a child properly fit in the society in which he lives.

### Responsibilities of the Family

Responsibilities of the family in educating the Nigerian child include:

1. Sending a child to school.
2. Funding
3. Provision of instructional materials
4. Medical care
5. Adequate feeding etc.

### Family Life Education during Childhood

Every parent or family is duty bound to send a child to school because it is the right of a child. According to UNICEF (2009)

*Globally significant progress has been made in primary enrolment/attendance and if current trends continue, most of the countries in the middle East/North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions appear to be on course for 2015.*

The UNICEF has been very serious in safeguarding the right to education even in emergency situations. At any given time, between a quarter and a third of the countries that UNICEF is working in/with are affected by emergencies arising from conflict or economic crisis.

- **Funding of education:** In most cases, funding of education at the lower level is the sole responsibility of the family or parents. What the paper means here is that qualitative education should be given to the

child and not just merely attending some of these public schools, where teachers would be on strikes for so many months.

- **Provision of instructional materials:** It is the duty of the parents to provide a child with all necessary requirements in the school such as text books and writing materials.
- **Medical care:** Parents should provide money for medical treatment whenever need arises. In an ideal situation, this is what is supposed to be done.
- **Feeding:** A child needs good feeding and if possible, should be given a balanced diet. If a child is properly fed, he will grow strong and healthy but in a situation whereby a child is not adequately fed, the reverse is the case.

### Child Rights and Participation

It is worth knowing that the Federal Government of Nigeria has inaugurated the children parliament in 2003 to enhance child participation. About 26 states have inaugurated children's parliaments. The main challenge is to make these parliaments truly representative of broad categories of Nigerian children, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. (UNICEF Nigeria 2007).

Other areas include Digitest: Digital peers international has been operating in Nigeria for about four to five years now. It has been organizing annual competition and the participants are

usually drawn from all over the Federation mainly secondary schools and few from primary schools. Digitest competition takes place in Abuja in August 22 to September 4 2009. About 600 participants are expected to attend. Another one will hold in China through Dubai between July 30 to August 12, 2009. About 50 participants are expected to attend. (Digital Peers International 2008).

### **The Role of the School as a Reflection of Society**

The school still remains as a conservative force. There is no doubt that education must respond to the needs of the society it serves. It is often referred to as a conservative force because it tends to perpetuate what is rather challenging the present situation. Corwin in Edet Okon (1982: 11) noted that there is an educational lag in that society may and have new needs while the school is still responding to the former conditions.

The school is therefore an instigator of change. The school generally responds to the needs of the society in a passive manner. Many educators contend that the school should take an active part in facilitating and guiding social changes. It is also necessary for the school to be involved in shaping the character of a child.

### **Assessment in School**

Our discussion regarding the Role and Responsibilities in educating the Nigerian child would not be complete if we fail to discuss the continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is one

of the landmarks in the Nigerian system of education that have been introduced as an important component of evaluation. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) prescribed that:

Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. Continuous assessment in schools refers to a system of assessment which is carried out at predetermined intervals for the purpose of monitoring over-all performance of the students and the teaching/learning environment (Okpala Onocha and Oyedeji 1993). It should be noted that continuous assessment goes beyond constant testing of pupils/students but it also involves systematic observations and recordings of observable behaviours of the learners with a view to determining the extent to which the objectives of a training programme are in the process of being attained and taking appropriate action to improve teaching/learning situation before things go bad. This is with respect to a cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning outcomes.

### **Contemporary View of Traditional Education**

Our discussion will not be complete without mentioning Traditional Education. Traditional Education at early childhood starts at home. With the institutionalization of Universal Primary Education in Nigeria, Traditional

Education may become extinct eventually, if time is not taken. The following are some of the phrases which are currently used to describe modern education and which seem to apply as well to Traditional education: learning by doing, early childhood education, effective learning psychomotor learning, individually guided instruction and community based education.

### **Learning by Doing**

Children in Traditional Education do not usually take notes while the teacher gives instruction. They only watch the teacher and later they practise by themselves. John Dewey who is known as the “The Father of Progressive Education once said “we learn by doing” while that is also in modern concept what means instruction. Many modern educational programmes are increasingly including early childhood education as an essential part of their system. For instance, Infant schools in England and Head Start Schools in America provide good examples of this new system. In past years, it assumed that the proper time to begin schooling was when a child reached the age of six. However, the new educators realize that the pre-school years are strategic years when the child’s cognitive processes are being formed. Many educators are convinced that an enriched intellectual environment can actually raise a child’s measured intelligence quotient (I.Q) and that, conversely, an impoverished environment tends to depress a child’s intellectual ability. For that reason, it is

necessary to provide early experiences for children before reaching the age of 6+.

### **Disruptive Foreign Influence**

In the recent times sometime described as the ‘Jet Age’, it has not been easy to train the Nigerian child to conform with acceptable norms and values. This is because of negative foreign influences which are harmful to the proper upbringing of a child. For example, blue films, phonographic pictures and worse still, Audio Visual Aids which have both positive and negative effects.

Note that we are not condemning Audio-Visual Aids but only positive aspects should be shown. This is an aspect that parents should pay more attention to. A child should be trained in such a way that he or she would not be a misfit in the community but should be morally acceptable in the society in which he lives.

### **Educating the Nigerian child and its implications for the family**

There is a negative parental attitude regarding the girl-child education over the years, despite the introduction of Universal Primary Education or UPE. This is more pronounced in some parts of Northern Nigeria. Unless the Federal and State Governments should come out with the policies that will enhance girl child education so as to allow them have equal opportunities as their counterparts in other states in the south, if not in the next two decades the North will be no where so far as girl child education is concerned, talkless of achieving Educational goal in 2015. Neglect to girl-child education has

adverse effects such as early marriages or unwanted pregnancies.

### The Way Forward

1. The education of Nigerian child should not be the responsibilities of the family or parents alone, but the community in which a child lives.
2. Parents should not leave a child solely to the school for training but they must play their roles in making sure that a child is socially and morally acceptable to the society.
3. In a situation whereby the parents are no longer alive, the close relatives should take over the training of the child left behind.
4. The federal government of Nigeria should ban all categories of phonographic pictures and the showing of blue films.
5. All forms of antisocial activities which tend to promote social vices should be avoided by all means.
6. Parents must not allow their children to follow those who are already polluted and misfit in the society.

### Conclusion

This paper has focused on the roles of the parents and the community in educating the Nigerian child at the formative stage. It has drawn attention to the deteriorating moral, cultural, intellectual and social values. Putting the values of traditional education side by side with the objectives of primary education as provided in the National policy on Education, the paper maintains that it is imperative that our primary school

curriculum needs to be redesigned to incorporate more positive social, cultural and moral values to realize our educational goals. The paper also contends that the exposure of the young children to the negative foreign influence should be discouraged. This is a cold war which all Nigerians must fight side by side.

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