

EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA

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Education For All (EFA) is a global concern which Nigeria as a country has continued to express interest as well as effectively future. For this she has acknowledged and subscribed to Article 26 of the 1848 Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This article states that every one has the right to education. Nigeria has no option than to show interest as other countries that are co-members of United Nations. On the continental level the quest for education led to the conference of African Ministers of Education held in 1961 at Addis Ababa. The conference set 1990 as the target year for all African Nations to achieve Universal Primary Education (UNESCO, 1961). This was not achieved until 1990 when other moves to educate all citizens in the world were initiated.

Education For All (EFA) is an international initiative first launched in Jomtien, Thailand in March 5-4 1990 to bring the benefits of education to "every citizen in every society" by 2015. In order to realize this global aim, a broad coalition of national governments, civil

society groups, development agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank were committed to achieving six specific education goals (MDGs).

1. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensure that by 2015, all children particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs,
4. Achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015 especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

5. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all especially in literacy, accuracy and essential life skills.

Nigeria featured very well in the World Conference and even presented an exciting model of primary Education Management based on Decree 31 of 1988 (Ade Ajayi, 1994) that resulted in the setting up of the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC).

Education as a concept is related to many variables that include the purpose of the learners, the aim of the teacher and the problem or level of technology of the society. Based on these, many explanations have been given to the concept. Some simply see it as the ability to read and write or the ability to read, write and perform some skills. Hornby (2007) defines education as a process of teaching, training and learning especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills. This is education in its formal sense. We may not lose sight of informal or indigenous education that we were born

into in our different cultures/communities. Our concern in this paper is the formal education. Education should be seen as the process of developing the potentials of an individual such that he/she can live a productive and a happy life in the society. The individual having been educated exhibits desirable behavioural changes. So education is basically an important human tool that can help the members of the society to fit into their society effectively and property, lohithakshan (2007) agrees that education is the most powerful instrument of social change and national integration. In a terse form, education is a tool for the integration of the individual effectively into a society where he can achieve self-actualization, develop national consciousness, promote tolerance as he lives with another, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress. The import of education for all especially in the 21st century cannot be toyed with.

The Need for Education

It is worthy of note that education serves the needs of the individual and that of the society. Education provides the individual with the opportunity to realize his potential goals and abilities in life. If these good values are achieved, he will be a happy and a useful citizen in the society.

Education goes beyond the literacy level which is the primary goal of an

educated person. Skills, good moral identity, quest for life success are also achieved. The individual uses these ideals to effect a positive change in the society that he belongs. At the national level education serves as a tool for building a united, independent and wealthy egalitarian society that can very well maintain its traditions and values. It is a source of financial empowerment because the financial proceeds for being educated and getting employed (privately or in civil service) go a long way to keep the individual going. It also gives one a political empowerment. People are elected into various political posts based on their academic qualifications.

Various Levels of Education

The formal education is concerned with four main levels - the nursery, primary school, secondary school and tertiary level. The nursery education has in the present century been fully recognized unlike before when many started their academic journey from primary school.

The primary education level is the key to the success or failure of the entire educational system. It is germane to the achievement of the over all national educational goals of Nigeria. Education at this level spans from age six to eleven years plus. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004:14) outlines the goals of primary education as:

- 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.

These goals aim at developing every child to his or her full potential which is the essence of education for all. The primary school education is the foundation level for education. According to Itedjere (2008), primary school education occupies an important place and period in a child's life, growth and development, therefore should be made available or accessible to all children. The idea of accessibility means making primary education free and compulsory. But this is not the case in Nigeria. Some state like Ebonyi, and Imo attempted

pursuing free basic education but it has failed for factors to be discussed later. Naidoo (2005) notes that UMICEF in its state of the "world children's report for 1999 announced that about four million Nigerian children have no access to basic education, and only about two thirds of all Nigerian children start and complete primary education. Since primary school education is not accessible to all children of school-going age, you can imagine the number that has access to education in other levels - Secondary and tertiary.

The Physically - Challenged Group

Physically-challenged or physical impairment has to do with limitations constituted to person or child by his inability to use the limbs, or any part of his body, or limitations constituted to him by lack of proper functioning of any part of his body, thus making it impossible for him to go about his normal daily duties, or live a normal life (Ogbebor, 1993). This can occur when the mobility of the person around his environment is highly restricted as a result of certain bodily problems that may be orthopaedic or otherwise, making it unable or difficult for him to go about his normal daily duties. Some of these problems may be traced to the respiratory or nervous system of the body. Education problem limits the effectiveness with which a child can cope with the academic, social and emotional of the school and community demands.

Our streets are littered with many of these persons as beggars since they cannot be given education or gainful employment. There is need for the public/government in power to come to the aid of these group of persons through special education. Since we emphasize or support education for all (EFA), they have to be made to belong by using education to minimize their predicaments so that they can live comfortably and be self-caring. Among the physically challenged are those withal

- a. Visual impairments (the blind)
- b. Speech and language impairments
- c. Hearing impairment (the deaf)
- d. Limb problems (the crippled etc)

All these need special attention through special education for survival. How can this be done? One may ask.

Educating the Blind

The FRN (2004:7) states that the Nigerian philosophy of education is based on:

- a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- b) The full integration of the individual into the community and.
- c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

If the above philosophy must be achieved the physically challenged must be educated. The notion in some quarters

that the blind has been sealed off permanently from education is now being challenged.

Students with visual impairments have unique educational needs which are most effectively met using a team approach of professionals. In order to meet their unique needs, students must have specialized services, books and instructional materials in appropriate media (including Braille), as well as specialized equipment and technology so that they can have equal access to the core and specialized curricula, and to enable them to most effectively compete with their peers in school and in society.

The visually impaired are taught by specially trained teachers in two types of schools - the special day school and special residential schools for the blind. In the first type, the student attend as day students and live as boarders in the second type. Apart from these special schools, the students can be taught in normal schools: where they are mainstreamed with other non-handicapped students. Abang in Okobia (1993) suggests that they be provided with certain services to aid their learning fast for a healthy competition with their non-handicapped peers. These services will include; full time special class, cooperative special class, resource room, itinerant teacher and teacher consultant. The other groups of individual who are physically-challenged have special ways of

educating them. (May be discussed in other fora).

The point of emphasis is that the physically challenged should not be neglected or denied education because of his physical inadequacy. UNESCO (2003) maintains that education is a tool that reinforces confidence in an individual regardless of his inability. The disabled school-age child should not be side-lined in access to primary and secondary education for this will make him a drop out or on alien in his own society. In the same vein UNICEF (2006) advocates that literacy education should be repackaged in line with the type of disability so as to neutralize the obstacle posed by such disability with the view of facilitating access to reading and writing among the primary and secondary school-age children.

Girl-Child Education (Female Education)

An important area of emphasis poorly attended to is the female education popularly known as Girl - child education F.E. is germane to national and sustain. A nation can prosper only with the united efforts of men and women. If both of them are educated, they can work hand in hand for the progress of the nation. If women are not educated, more than half of the population is uneducated hence the saying "Educate a woman, and you educate whole families. Such a country cannot progress with half of uneducated population. Indigenous education did not

in the past advocate for female education. The popular notion then was that educating girls was not necessary since their functions were clearly defined. That is give birth to a baby, look after them, and their homes (Akuma, 2008).

It should be recalled that education is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child. The World Bank (2012) draws attention to the fact that there are still 35 million girls out of school. The attendant effect is seen in gaps in labour force participation. The systematic exclusion of girls/women from school and the labour force translates into a less educated workforce, inefficient allocation of labour lost productivity, and consequently diminished progress in economic development. Available data show this disparity very glaringly. Data published by NERC in 1982 revealed that the total number of males that enrolled in secondary schools in Bauchi State was 21,903 as against 4,768 females; in Kwara State, 60116 males but 36,630 females; in Rivers State 52,997 males but 33,505 females, in Plateau State 30882 males but 12452 females; in Sokoto State 30,334 males but 3,513 females.

The statistics in employment is not equally balanced. For instance an employment survey in 1996 from the Federal office of statistics shows that the number of Professors and Readers in

Nigeria Universities as at 1992/93 was 1,315 males as against 80 females; primary school teachers as at 1993 were 99,359 males as against 53,363 females. These data buttress gender differentiation in education and employment (Enaibe and Imonivwerha 2009). In view of the aforementioned the girl-child deserves to be properly educated in tandem with education for all (EFA). She should not be denied this inalienable right.

Problems Associated with EFA

UNESCO (2008) is of the view that many of the developing countries including Nigeria will not accomplish EFA by 2015 which is the target year. The UNESCO report further enlisted Nigeria as one of the fifteen countries with the highest proportion of illiterates and one of the top five developing countries of the world that will not achieve any meaningful EFA goals by 2015 because she doesn't lay much emphasis on access to education. This is a big minus for Nigeria. The problems of EFA in Nigeria are not different from the problems always talked about against the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE). These include among others:

- a) Instability and lack of political will
- b) Inadequate funding
- c) Teacher quality
- d) Poor physical facilities.

Instability and Lack of Political Will

Every Nigerian had desired a stable government either from the military or

the civilian. Democratic government does not work in Nigeria. There has not been an accepted political will to conceive, plan and implement a national educational programme in a systematic, sustainable manner (Maduewesi, 2005) it seems that those at the corridors of power have little regard for qualitative education in Nigeria or that many forces are against proper educational planning. (Note that many Nigerians are found studying in Ghana, US and other countries with stable education system.

Funding

Funding has always been a strong factor in the execution of projects and programmes in Nigeria. It is either the fund is provided and misused by few individuals or the fund is not there at all. The budget for each year sets out a chunk of money for education sector but the aim is never realized. Many state governments advocate free and compulsory education (Imo, Ebonyi etc) at primary and secondary levels but the lofty idea will not be achieved. We need proper planning to use the huge financial resources we generate from our mineral deposits to achieve education for all.

Teacher Quality

The importance of the teacher in the teaching - learning process cannot be overemphasized. The problem of "teacher" hinges more on quality than in quantity. Maduabum (2008) expresses concern that massive education in the context of UBE scheme should not be finding "enough-willing warm bodies" to

keep order in the classroom, rather the problem is to find enough who can also teach and not cheat. This borders on teacher quality.

Remember that no education should rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004). Of recent National Teachers' Institute (NTI) has recruited under the Pivotal Teachers' Training Programme (PTTP) a group of teachers for our primary schools. These are holders of two or three papers in SSCE. The educational background of these teachers are not enough to quality them to teach at the foundation level of our educational system. Okafor in Maduabum (2008:6) feels that "it is an evident professional perception that children who otherwise would be high achievers can be destroyed if their teaching at the primary school level is characterized by inadequacy and ignorance". It becomes important that quality teachers should be trained for our schools especially primary and secondary levels where EFA will be felt more. Another factor of crucial importance is physical facilities.

Physical Facilities

The physical facilities that are provided in our schools do not match with the population of children in schools now. They are sometimes insufficient in terms of number or inadequate in terms of quality. Okeke in Salau (2001) points out that a substantial number of schools have no sufficient number of classrooms to

accommodate the teeming school population. He goes on to emphasize that the problem becomes more marked when one realizes that many of the existing school buildings are inadequate and in a bad state of repair. It is also disheartening to observe that in some schools in the rural setting, children still sit under leafy trees as classrooms. This is not to be expected in this 21st century. For EFA to be actualized, enough funds should be made available by all stakeholders in education for the provision, preservation and maintenance of physical facilities in our schools.

Problem of Girl-Child Education

The major problems surrounding the education of the girl-child are those that tend to favour the boy-child to the detriment of the girl-child. These problems are the family factor, the school factor, socio-cultural factor, gender stereotyping and poor self-concept.

Very prominent among these factors is the socio-cultural factor. Some Nigerian cultures merely prepare the female for marriage. Her education is seen as unnecessary waste of family money since she will eventually relocate on account of marriage to another family. For this reason the boy-child who remains in the family is preferred to be given education if resources are available. In most families, the bride price from the girl serves as a school fee for the boy's education. Adewole in Okoro (2011) points out that:

Women are regarded as secondary or junior to men. For this reason, instead of going to school, these parents would prefer their daughters to stay back at home and serve as sources of the family's labor. They cook, clean the compound and baby sit

These problems and many others not mentioned exclude the girl child from the benefit of being educated which is her right. With the spirit of EFA, the curve should be skewed to the benefit of the girl-child.

Prospects of EFA

Even though the problems of EFA or UBE are enormous, there are prospects that will help implementation for the future generation. It has to be noted once more that one major role of education is to provide all children the opportunity to realize their potentials in their life time. With the advocacy of EFA, every Nigerian child, with no bias to gender will have unfettered access to free education up to junior secondary level. This is already part of the UBE scheme Salau (2001) strongly feels that this will in turn ensure 100% transition from primary to junior secondary school thus eliminating the low transition rate syndrome that has become a dominant feature of the Nigerian system as well as correcting the lopsided educational opportunities that have hitherto favoured the male child at least in the foundation stages.

There is a lot of importance attached to mass literacy campaign now that will ensure that the marginalized groups such as illiterate adults, handicapped children, marginalized workers and out-of-school youths will have access to basic education. UNICEF and the Federal government of Nigeria adopted the non-formal education (NFE) mode for these youths. The two stakeholders have equally designed a new curriculum with distinctive features to accommodate the needs of these out-of-school youths.

Remarkable progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in education. Over the past three decades the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in school has risen at all levels. The most significant increase in girls' enrollment in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia has been at the primary education level. In countries in East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the increase in girls' enrollment has been at the secondary education level, while in Europe and Central Asia, girls' enrollment has appreciated most at the tertiary education level.

The World Bank is a strong stakeholder in the international drive to improve gender equality and empower girls and women. The Bank has now evolved a strategy known as "Education Strategy 2010, Learning for All". Women and gender issues are central to this strategy. The Bank recognizes that many of the benefits of educating girls

and women, whether in terms of employability, income, health, or their own children's development, depend on what they learn while in school. The Bank's Education Strategy 2010, participation in the Global Partnership for Education (formerly the Fast Track Initiative) and the 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development have reinforced the Bank's commitment to "Education for All" and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The recent World Bank projects supporting girls' participation in education have helped yield the following results globally:

1. **Bangladesh:** Enrollment of girls in secondary schools has risen to over 6 million from 1,1 million in 1991.
2. **Burkina Faso:** 55 percent female enrollment in the 20 most underprivileged provinces in 2006, compared to 36 percent in 2000.
3. **Cambodia:** A scholarship for girls enrolling in secondary school raised transition rates from primary to secondary school by 30 percent
4. **Pakistan:** More than 400,000 girls received stipends to go to school in Punjab, Pakistan's largest province.
5. **Yemen:** Approximately 34,000 girls from the most underprivileged rural households have benefited from conditional cash transfers tied to

school attendance.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Government at all levels (Federal and State) should intensify mass literacy campaign through non-formal Education and adult literacy. Many are still longing to get education they missed at their younger days.

The world bodies - UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO etc should intensify their financial backing and plans to get EFA a reality in many developing nations of the world.

Any fund set out for education and other projects in the country has to be closely monitored to ensure proper utilization. It has been a common practice to divert, embezzle or mismanage funds meant for education. Tetfund should be accessed to increase facilities in schools. Local governments and development centres should be encouraged to aid education by providing structures in schools around them. A tot of money is wasted in local government administration. Personal pockets are enriched instead of utilizing the funds where the masses will benefit more.

Free and compulsory education sounds very ridiculous in many places. It should be made a reality. Free education doesn't end in asking all children of school-going age to enroll in schools. A proper plan must have been made to accommodate them and teach them qualitatively.

It is time-consuming to train quality teachers, but the government has to evolve a practicable scheme to train quality teachers for primary and secondary schools. Teacher trainees in faculties of Education in Nigeria should spend one full year in their schools of teaching practice with their supervisors effectively monitoring them. Those in colleges of education should spend four years; their internship year inclusive. By this, many quality teachers will be produced.

The physically challenged needs education and must be educated through special education centres equipped with learning facilities to compete with their non-handicapped colleagues.

There is need for a grassroots campaign on the education of the girl child. The female deserves to be educated like her male counterpart. Females should not be prepared for home cares only. A well educated female transfers her education to many members of a community.

From the foregoing EFA principle and spirit should be adopted in all the states of Nigeria. Even though education for all in 2015 cannot be achieved, but a good working plan can be set in motion to reduce the number of illiterates in Nigeria to a very low percentage. Parents need to realize that education of youths is the only answer now for a better Nigeria.

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