

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN SUSTAINING FOUNDATION EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is on challenges and prospects in sustaining foundation education in Nigeria. The present chorus of disapproval of Nigerians on education quality, low productivity from school leavers and graduates and a total set-back of the entire school and schooling products and processes is at the peak. As a result, this paper viewed the general problems of Nigerian education right from the foundational level, the micro stage of plan, implementation and provision. To this background the paper stresses on the importance of foundation education, presents the meaning and outlined, logical steps to fortify the pledge of the universalization of foundation education in Nigeria. A highlight on early foundation of education was given, challenges facing efficient foundation education were stated and proposed strategies to re-strengthen and build up strong foundation education was provided. Among the prospect for the future foundation education is implementing a properly planed foundation education that will bridge the gap of inequality among school children, improve on contents and structures of teaching and learning to promote self-reliance kind of education, with the vision of vocationalizing educational contents. Therefore a progressive foundation education should embrace social change and not to be stagnant in nature.

*****foundation education-primary education**

Introduction

The social significance attached to the foundational level of education is revealing a new methodological importance of strong basic education, as the background for all stages of education to nation building, sustainability and general development. The progress of foundation education marks one factor of the early beginning of socio-political, economic, scientific and technological achievement and development in the nation. This will further be actualized by implementing a quality and sustainable foundation education, with a vision of empowering the schools, with richer learning contents, improved quality physical structures, redressing the problems and shortcomings of teaching and learning, by providing relevant and up-to-date instructional materials, devising workable and holistic plans for improving universalization and provision of primary needs of education to arrest fundamental foundational factors of learning in Nigerian schools. To Adesola (2002), foundation education is the early primary education that will enable positive Nigerians, and is that, which will enable pupil to use his or her head and hands, utilizing local resources of immediate environment for self-reliance and development. The objective of this is to make a better chance of vocational education, creative individual and better citizen's right, from the onset of early school ages. Building of a nation should strategically start with strong and visible foundation education. Aggarwal (2007, p.260) elucidated that:

A well planned and properly implemented system of education at this stage plays a very significant role in laying down the proper foundation of child's culture, emotional, ethical, intellectual, moral, physical, social and spiritual development.

Thus, elegant and optimistic plan for foundation education contributes to the building of indigenous culture, fostering national values and improved on national emotional integration. To Farrant (2004), the expectations of countries toward adequate preparation and provision of strong foundation of education are generally with improved factors of environmental, socio-economic and political development. The processes involve universalization and have to be reaffirmed, reassessed, restructured and restarted in Nigeria. Present practice of education which is the Universal Basic Education initiated in 1976 with the idea of Universal Primary Education and re-emerged in 1999 with a change in slogan from universal Primary to Basic Education, thus this has to be re-evaluated to satisfy the urge of the emerging challenges of the nation in 21st century Nigeria.

Overview of Early foundation Education in Nigeria

The evolving status of groundwork education called for changes in the management, control and funding strategies right from the early day of the missionaries. In the view of Wilson (1979), the development of primary (foundation) education involves four stages. The first stage was between 1842 and 1880. This period was more of missionary activities, where schools were used to convert native citizens. Schooling system then had no uniformity in the nation. The second stage was in-between 1880-1890; this time the colonial government enacted an education code in 1882 in Lagos protectorate. The colonial government at this time provided grants and takes care of schooling by over seeing their activities. The third phase was 1890-1920, which witnessed the creation of northern and southern protectorates and it was followed by educational code necessitating yearly inspectorate report (Maduyesi, 1990). To Wilson (1979) the last phase was marked to be 1920-1950, when colonial government allowed Phelps- Stokes foundation to send educational commission to West Africa. The tour of this commission resulted in tentative report on the nature of foundation education. The structure of this level of schooling was very poor throughout, not until the 1969 curriculum conference, followed by review panel in 1970. The situation was not helping until the publication of National Policy on Education 1977. This development first gave education and foundation education the pride place which it rightly deserves as the key to the success or failure of the whole education system in the country. These indicate the delicate nature of foundation education and the quality of this affect all other sectors of education.

Presently, the nation's objective of achieving sound foundation education is the formulation of various educational goals, coupled with programme. The present universal basic education is designed to meet the objectives of Nigeria first stage of education. Federal Government of Nigeria (2004, p.14) outlined the following as the goals of primary education, which is considered the first foundation of education:

- 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.

Sequel to the above goals of Nigerian principal education, which is summed to be the foundation of education programme, it appears necessary to have a laid down mechanisms to execute the program of education. Here, principles should be initiated, to maintain and sustain the existence of the schooling goals as cited in the National Policy on Education.

Challenges facing efficient foundation education in Nigeria

Charles and Iheme (2002), uphold that for any programme to achieve its goal there should be a wide range of coverage of the participants. This implies covering about 75.5 percent population of the targeted group, the primary pupils. In Nigeria, the marginal group which is the larger population of the rural areas and girls, the have not, migrant children and those involve in trafficking are suffering from lack of access to information and good schools facilities. These factors militate against the success of foundation education plan. In a national initiative, the coverage of population should not sideline, marginalize or differentiate between any tribe and group, as minority, majority, superior or inferior. There should be respect for all, all genders and aged people. Once these factors are tackled, the end result is progress, in term of universalization of education.

This situation is largely experienced in Nigerian schools; more pronounced in rural areas and excluded schools. The provision equal educational opportunity should cut across states and local governments, the distribution of educational facilities, should go round all the tiers of the federation (Abdul, 2000). Universal Education Programme should be encouraged, be revisited not to be dormant. Evolutional process in education system remains the heart of the plans. This make policy makers, providers and community members to assess all education plans for further recommendations to improve its validation (Alabi, 1991).Some places might have facilities and remain abandon, this wastage affect the educational plan of the future in a country, all facilities should be provided and be utilize properly for the purpose it is meant for (Aggarwal, 2007).Apathy and poverty of parents, affects educational plan

and programme of schooling in societies, this led to who should go to school, how long to stay in school and predict the necessary chances of completion or not. As a result, less privilege and female children suffers the disadvantage in poor families and rural communities (Inuwa, 2008).

In a related study, Inuwa posits that, government policy might be jeopardized as a result of poor execution of plan and preparation. The educational programme is affected by defective curriculum, uninspiring method of teaching, lack of suitable reading and writing materials and lack of qualified teachers. These equally stand the chance to affect future of foundation education if not managed properly. On the side of the policy makers, Chruden and Sherman (1990) states that, frequent transfer of teachers, poor or lack of supervision of staff, failure to enforce compulsory compliance to law seriously affect the situation of policy implementation, in which foundation education is not an exception until adequate major is taking.

Proposed strategies for Sustaining foundation education in Nigeria

Based on the above challenges, Universal Basic Education (2002) encapsulates that; the content and context of sustainable foundation education for development in Nigeria should involve the following:

- Universalizing the provision of schools within a walk-able distance, will attract local inhabitant from various communities to fully participate in educational pursuit. Career choice perhaps improves and closes up the gap of lack of access to schools. This will help to improve the culture of schooling. The implication is the possible completion and inbuilt confident to face national and global challenges.
- Foundation education should be maintaining the plan of continuous enrolment of pupils, this practice should be constantly engaged in and regularly strive to up lift schooling standard irrespective of location, age, status, gender or ability.
- There should be universal policy for retention in primary schools, so that no pupil drops out, regardless of any attached status there should be equal access and the ability of completing basic education in Nigeria. Thus ensuring this implies constant monitoring, supervision and evaluation programme.

Nigeria foundation education should be the bedrock for progressive foundational development for the sustainment of brighter Nigeria schooling system. This is by providing facilities for the execution of the nation's primary education initiatives.

In a related study, United Nations Development Programme (2002) summed that; sustainable programme has the characteristics of perfect continuity and is an assessable plan with the features of evaluation. To actualize the plan of effective programme for foundation education, these are some strategies:

- Because education is a tool for social mobility, basic policies should guide and govern possible implementation of basic education as the foundation education in the country, for speedy eradication of illiteracy and empowering citizens. Education serves as a basic security for livelihood, and for improving citizen's well-being in all sectors of life (Anuforo, 2007).
- Educational laws should be strong, liberal and universal to compensate the status and ability of the less privileged, by forcing, redirecting and implementing strategies to attract and ease schooling, irrespective of status in Nigerian societies, by having affordable, accessible and available (FGN, 2004).
- Foundation education should be able to equip the citizens with skills and the ability to utilize the learnt skills for self-reliance in a democratic society. The vocationalizing and improving foundation education is the primary factor for general social well-being in Nigeria (UNDP, 2002).
- Education should enhance the chances for full participation of every citizen in education exercise, politics and social economic activities of the society (ies). Education should pave way and provide formal information for the consideration of national laws by citizens, to obey by means of simple literacy adoption (FGN, 2004).
- Farrant (2004) posits that, sustainable foundation education (primary education) requires provision of basic literacy facilities for instruction and better understanding of the nation's future in social, economic, political and scientific base.
- UBE (2002) opined that, to be able to sustain the activities of foundation education, which a well is known early stage of education, this requires the nation to improve, by ensuring compulsory provision and access to education. Facilities to sustain primary school should be adequately provided in large number with good teachers. These include provision of quality and educated staff, which will further enhance teaching and learning requirements.

Conclusion

For a nation to achieve any educational objective the outlined prospects, have to be taken care of. This stage, which is the foundation, determine the ability to maintain

and sustain good and sound education which is the foundation of all educational programmes. Perhaps determines the success of the nation education system. The entire social, economic and political plan of a nation depends strongly on the education and this education should begin its fundamental journey from the early school ages. The safeguarding of solid education foundation in Nigeria will lead us to a better and improved education in the future. This is only possible if there will be equity, justice and adequate provision and supervision of education programme in the entire corner of the nation regardless of ethnic groups, geographical location, status and political interest.

Prospects for the Future of foundation Education

Foundation education should be developed on a priority basis and the percentage of the budget under this sector should be suitably raised. (Aggarwal, 2007). That management of education should be the duty of all members of society.

The policy of sustaining foundation education toward should reduce the problems of inequality in schooling and improve access to schools. This should involve reduction of differences existing between states, regions, districts and societies in terms of education provision. On a micro basis differences exists in family between children of one home, to this background Inuwa (2008) argues that, stratification has a micro status where it began form home as parents stratified between children, who to get what, as a result of limited resources, with unlimited social, and economic life demand. Every child should be given equal chance to partake in the pursuit of education in any society.

School programme should be more attractive and remain functional within the care of providing a functional individual in the society. In this regard, educational programme should not be stagnant and should be assessable, and be accessible by individual in society. This is to enhance progressive recommendations and the placements of accountability where necessary.

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