

THE ROLE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INCULCATING VALUES, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Education helps define the life, value, political culture and economic power of a nation. Knowledge, skills, norms and values of responsible citizen are inculcated through education. It is through education that the human resource capital of a nation is harnessed and deployed for national development. Primary education is education given normal to children aged between six and eleven years and above, 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. This paper therefore intends to investigate the role of primary education in acquiring the necessary skills, values and knowledge needed for national development. Recommendation for improvement and a way forwards were also proffered.

Education is said to be an indispensable tool in national development. It is the process of training and development of the mental potentials, physical knowledge, skills and character of individuals by formal and informal schooling. Education is a value tool that the society uses for achieving social, economic and political development.

Kukwi and Kallat (1998) define education as the process by which a person develops ability, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society in which he lives. This implies that education is any process in which a person gains insight or develops useful attitudes and values which enable him make right

decisions and choices in the society he lives in. Primary education is seen as the education which children receive from the age of 6 years to 11 years plus. It is the foundation level of the education system which runs for six years, and it is aimed at developing basic literacy, communication skills and transmission of the culture of the people of younger generation.

One may wish to point out that in the olden days when the missionaries and colonial masters were in charge of education, education was given priority attention. They used to achieve what they wanted. The earliest Nigerians who received primary education were literate enough to serve as lay preachers,

interpreters, messengers, clerical officers and even administrative officers, they could write and speak good English for their masters to comprehend. But today in Nigeria, some primary school leavers cannot write their names. The teachers in primary school are not respected by the children. Pupils prefer to go and sell or engage in one activity or the other that will yield money than to go to school and read. At this early stage, children lack respect, values, skills and the love of the country is not there. There are many problems of ethnicity, religious crisis, poverty and corruption affecting an average Nigerian child. Based on this, there is the need to inculcate values, knowledge, skills and the spirit of love in the mind of pupils and improve the quality of education at the primary school level.

The Concept of Primary Education and Its Objectives

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004, 4th edition) refers to primary education as the education given in institutions of learning for children aged 6 to 11 plus. It further stresses that 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 national education system.

Objectives of Primary Education

Nigeria as a country has its objectives that need to be achieved in primary education. These objectives if carefully implemented will no doubt help the country to inculcate the strong spirit of value, knowledge and skills at the primary

school level of education. This means that education can prepare and equip learners for all aspects of life. In line with this, the objectives of primary education as contained in the national policy on education (2004: 11) can help to inculcate knowledge, skills, values and love of the country in the young ones at the primary school level as they grow up with it both academically and physically. The objectives are as follows:

1. To inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
2. To lay a second basis for scientific and relative thinking.
3. Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society.
4. Mould the character and develop sound attitude and moral in the child.
5. To develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
6. Give the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.
7. To provide the child with basic tools for further education advancement including preparation of trades and crafts and locality.

The above stated objectives can easily be achieved if all the citizens will be given equal opportunities which include among others free education, infrastructural facilities and financial banking etc.

In essence, the objective of primary education in Nigeria will help to lay a good foundation for the inculcation of value, knowledge, skills, tolerance and good attitude in Nigeria. Madueke (2004: 37) opined that experts on human development such as Brunner, Bloom, Piaget etc. have emphasized the need to lay good foundation for intellectual learning at the early years of growth and development. Objective number three lay emphasis on citizen education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society while number four lays emphasis on the moulding of character and development of sound attitude and moral in the child. These two objectives are important for the inculcation of value, knowledge and skills for national development. Nigeria as a country is expected to pay attention to how the characters of children are moulded especially at the primary level of education. Citizens are not sure of the characters of their children when they are young, and cannot account for their character when they grow up. Therefore, the objective of primary education in the inculcation of values, skills knowledge and attitude should be taken seriously.

The Concept of Standard in Education

Standard as a concept is defined by Encarta World English Dictionary (1999) as a level of quality of excellence that is accepted as the norm or by which actually attained are judged. It is also defined by chambers (2004) as an established or accepted mode of something that is basic or something that functions as

a model of excellence of other similar things.

The standard of primary education can be judged if the quality of Nigeria education is attained. According to Isiyaku (2007), the standard and quality of education in Nigeria can be determined by its ability to produce an all round developed individual physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and morally, who can use their knowledge, skill and competence to participate actively in the national development efforts of the country.

Primary education being the foundation for the growth and development or failure of education is intricately related to the growth of all other levels of education. The standard therefore of all levels of education retied to the standard of primary education. The negation in the development of primary education can be vividly seen in the other levels of education.

Concept of National Development

National development according to Ogundele (2001) may be defined as all these activities, social, ideological, economic, ecological and psychological that a man does to enhance or ensure his survival and progress within a given environment setting at a point in time. Development equally refers to human resources growth, economic resources, improved skill and productivity of labour.

Kukwi and Kallat (1998) are of the opinion that development brings about the unfolding realization of mans creative potentials which enable him improve his

material condition of living through the use of resources available to him in a nutshell, it is a process in which man's personality is enhanced.

The Role of Primary Education in Inculcating Value, Skills and Knowledge

According to Iyamu (1990), understanding the objective of Nigerian primary education helps one to appreciate the needs to inculcate values, skills and attitude in school children. These include the following:

1. Inculcating the sense of responsibility in others

The old adage of being one's brother's keeper is being eroded by the greedy desire for national wealth. People do not seem to regard their responsibilities to others as fundamental. This is not good because they are trying to destroy the unique feature of our cultural life styles. There are numerous ways we can feel concerned for our fellow men. These include showing sympathy, consoling during grief, aiding during need, directing during confusion, especially in the case of strangers, protecting in the case of threats and so on. These attributes are fast dying among the youths hence the child in the primary school must begin to learn how to develop this spirit of concern for and responsibility for others.

2. Promotion of democratic living

Nigeria is trying to be one of the democratic countries in the world, though many Nigerians are yet to imbibe the desired political culture needed for the

survival of democratic living. Through inculcation of values, skills and knowledge in primary school, the child will become exposed to some of the political norms and values of the society. This can be done during election periods e.g. refraining from election malpractice, voting for the right leader and discouraging corrupt practices. If the child gets this training from the beginning, he is likely to grow into adulthood with the desired political orientation, patriotic attitude and national consciousness.

3. Respect for the worth and dignity of others

Nigeria is not only diverse in its ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and social composition but also facing a crisis in which some ethnic or religious groups try to dominate others because of self-assumed superiority. This brings rancor and prejudice which cause disunity. The Nigerian child should learn from the beginning that all Nigerians are equal in spite of social and cultural differences between them. Through this, primary education helps to inculcate into the child the spirit of acceptance of the respect for the worth of every Nigerian.

4. Inculcation of desirable values and social attitude

Primary education has been seen as a means for the inculcation of desirable attitudes and values in the child as a means of social reform. It is in this light that even while some people have seen primary education as a means of socialization, others see it as indoctrination. Whichever

applies, what is important is the inculcation of desirable values and attitudes of the society from one generation to another. Without doing this, the child will find it difficult to fit into the society. Doing this seems to be the unique role of primary education because the subject is largely based on the socio-cultural context of the society. Some of the societal values of inculcation are honesty, fair play, hard work, patriotism, obedience, discipline, loyalty, respect, self confidence among others.

5. Increasing awareness

What should bother one is why Nigerians are interested in breaking the laws of the land than helping to uphold them, which of course is one of their civil responsibilities. Some of these acts are done out of ignorance of the consequences.

There is a study which reports that most of those that rig or allow themselves to be used for rigging election did so out of the ignorance of the consequences their actions would have on the effective leadership of the nation. It is therefore necessary for the child to be exposed gradually to his right and civil duties as a citizen. The creation of this awareness is one of the needs for primary education in Nigeria.

In primary schools, the child is introduced to the key value of respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity care and harmony and is encouraged to live by these values in his/her actions. Here are some examples of things that you can encourage the child to do at home to

reinforce the values that are taught in schools.

1. Greet parent and family members such as in the morning when the child wakes up.
2. Keep his/her study area and bedroom clean and tidy e.g. encouraging the child to make his/her own bed.
3. Clean up the dining table after a meal e.g. return the used utensils to the kitchen sink and for the older children, they should learn how to wash the utensils.
4. Be honest at all times even when nobody is looking and introduce him/her to the good example of honest behavior.
5. Make friends with neighbors and other children they meet in the neighborhood e.g. at the play ground.

Problem Facing Primary Education in Nigeria

The problems facing primary education in Nigeria are as follows:

1. Lack of quality learning environment which include low quality of school facilities. The problem of inadequate facilities increased with the introduction of UPE, because of influx of pupils in the primary schools (Dike 2003) some of the schools have dilapidated buildings which are not conducive for effective learning to take place in them.
2. Large class size as well as unacceptable teacher-student ratio hinders active participation and contribution towards being tolerant, knowledgeable and good character towards national development. Teacher's behavior and school disciplinary policies all contribute to negative realization of inculcating

values, skills and knowledge in primary education-pupils.

3. The quality content of the intended and taught curriculum of schools should be supervised with seriousness because most often, what is taught to children in schools is not in conformity with what is in the curriculum which should have been the starting point for the development and implementation of curriculum.

4. The caliber of teachers who teach these vulnerable children need to be revisited because most of these teachers are half baked who also need value, skills and knowledge. Most often than not the unqualified teachers end up misleading the children by teaching them wrongly.

5. Staffing the teacher is the central factor in the process of quality and equality of education.

Most of the primary school teachers take teaching as second choice because they have no alternative. They leave teaching immediately there is an alternative. There is high mobility of teachers to more profiting jobs which is a problem of its own.

Conclusion

For Nigeria to develop positively as a nation, all hands must be on deck by all and sundry in giving primary education all the necessary attention it deserves as the foundation upon which subsequent educational activities will be laid.

Leaders at all levels must have a change of mind towards education at all level especially at the primary level leaders should be functional and transformational and be capable of

providing as well as improvising materials needed for the success of primary education through the collection of adequate data and statistics for proper planning and inculcation of the desired and right type of values, skills and knowledge needed for national development.

Recommendation

The increasing awareness of the need for primary school education to inculcate values, knowledge and skills for national development cannot be over emphasized. In order to achieve these, the following measures are recommended.

1. There is need for quality teaching and learning environment with adequate human and material resources in addition to qualified competent and dedicated teachers who are themselves well behaved and disciplined with the knowledge and skills entailed in the training of children at the primary school.

2. There is need for critical sensitization of the general public on the importance of inculcating values, skills and knowledge for peace, progress and development of any nation.

3. There should be attitudinal change in the primary education through which the culture of values, skills and knowledge will be inculcated.

4. Whatever is taught to the child by the teacher (whom the children listen better than their parents) should be taught the right thing at right time because any knowledge instilled into a child is like a word written on the stone which stays permanently on the stone. In this case is on the children's brain and this gives a solid

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foundation for a new national development devoid of tribalism hooliganism, extremism and other social vices in the society.

5. Classrooms should be provided and the sanitary condition should be made adequate.

6. Professionalism should be emphasized in the teaching profession, and the teacher should be adequately trained during the pre-service or in-service programme.

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