



Practical Procedures in Ensuring Quality Primary Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACTS

Universally, education is considered to be a basic parameter that determines the change and transformation in the socio-political, scientific, and technological spheres of every nation. The primary phase of education, though not given the deserved attention in Nigeria foundation of the entire educational system. A functional, qualitative, and comprehensive primary education curriculum is needed to drive the national development agenda. This paper advocated that the qualitative primary school is what can make education at higher levels an important instrument for national development. Some challenges such as poor funding, incompetent teachers, inadequate supervision/inspection as well as non-regular assessment among others were identified as problems militating against primary education in Nigeria. However, some suggestions were made such as; the introduction of entrepreneurship education in schools and the conduct of regular supervision and inspection should be made. Above all, the budget for education especially primary schools should be improved.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 08 May 2021

First revised 03 Jun 2022

Accepted 28 Jun 2022

First available online 29 Jun 2022

Publication date 01 Sep 2022

Keyword:

Primary school,
Procedures,
Quality Assurance,
Quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has tremendous importance in the development of every society and nation. It cannot be denied that the success of an education system depends on some factors such as ensuring quality education and proper implementation of curriculum, which will help in achieving the desired target goals and objectives. However, many factors determine the quality of education received by the individual. No doubt, education is the bedrock of the nation's socio-political development. Every nation depends on the quality of education to sustain its development.

Education is a human right that should be given to all beings irrespective of age, class, race, and socioeconomic status. There are a lot of international human rights instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right which include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1960). The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a basic index of development. There is no gain in saying the fact that education is very vital to the pace of social, political, and economic development of any nation. Education is a key investment in any nation with enormous social and economic benefits accruing from it. This explains why one of the national education goals is the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical, and social abilities and competencies as tools for the individual to live and contribute to the development of society.

Qualitatively, the type of education being imparted to students by the majority of schools is not relevant to the development needs of Nigerians. This implies that an appropriate education approach is yet to be given attention. [Oloruntoyin \(2011\)](#) stated that at present, the quality of education offered to children in primary schools in Nigeria is below standard. Every individual, family, community, and nation depend on education to move forward. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level of education is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. Primary education is therefore a reservoir of knowledge and a centre of learning basic skills for national development.

Despite the contribution of education to development, Nigerian leaders have not given education especially, primary education adequate attention it deserves. This is one of the reasons for the nation's underdevelopment although the country has brilliant, impeccable, and well-written policies, vision, and reform agenda that have failed at the implementation stage. Hence, for Nigeria to attain the goals of the national development agenda, functional, relevant, and comprehensive primary education has to be the paramount focus because it is the foundation of the entire system. Therefore, the realization of the transformation agenda is hinged on making the primary education system viable and the education acquired functional.

It is important to note that, the first parameter to be prioritized in any country that desires to be developed is quality education. This education should be given more attention, especially in the first phase of education (primary education). This is because, for example, if one intends to erect a building structure; the experts must lay a strong foundation to serve as reliable reinforcement to carry the other loads. This is similar to qualitative education from the grassroots because it does ensure adequate preparation for the next phase of education.

Poor primary education may be a result of so many factors such as lack of political commitment, challenges of competent teachers, inadequate funding, and fewer environmental services. For primary education to be more qualitative certain procedures need to be put into consideration.

2. METHODS

This study was a literature review. Detailed information on how the process for the literature review is explained elsewhere.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept of Primary Education in Nigeria

According to National Policy on Education (NPE), primary education is the education given to school children aged 6-11 years. It is the first phase and compulsory education. Primary education is the first six years of the nine years of basic education using the Universal Basic Education (UBE) standard. Globally, in most countries, primary education is compulsory for children to receive and parents should ensure they provide it. Children are usually placed in classes with teachers who will be primarily responsible for their education for that year. This teacher may be assisted to varying degrees by other teachers in certain subject areas. In 2014, statistics show that there are about 62,406 primary schools with 23,126,927 pupils but with limited and incompetent teachers in Nigeria. The vision statement of Universal Basic Education (UBE) that encompasses primary education states that, at the end of nine years of continuous education, every child should acquire appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable to contribute to the general development of the society.

3.2. QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's primary school atmosphere is experiencing challenges of low quality in terms of operation and required facilities to cater to teachers and students, which this resulted in rampant examination malpractices, lack of parental commitment to school activities, the inbuilt culture of incompetency, and general hopelessness leading to students' failure.

Other challenges could be a lack of quality instructional materials, inadequate monitoring, supervision, and evaluation as well as a lack of quality assessment, accountability, students'/staff welfare, and entrepreneurship education to respond to the developmental needs of Nigeria. Quality Assurance is the mechanism used to evaluate the efficiency and appropriateness of teaching and learning at all levels of education to ensure the delivery of high-quality education.

Quality assurance is that which deals with the proactive means of assuring quality inputs, quality outcomes, quality academic achievements of pupils, and the environment before things get out of hand. This further explains that quality input refers to the worth of teachers, trainees, textbooks, the technology of delivery, and tasks or curriculum. Quality of process deals with the teaching and learning process that involves a plan, delivery methods, classroom organization and control, student-teacher interaction, pupils' participation, assessment, and evaluation. Quality of outcome and outputs involves the academic achievement and attainment, value-added through education, and results of internal and external examinations. A quality environment involves the summation of all environmental factors. This is because education is seen and regarded as a service to society and a predominant force in our society. The services it renders must be good and qualitative. These services do not just happen by chance; they must be planned and managed from the design stage to the delivery, from maintaining efficient operations to ensuring that the quality is high.

Moreover, quality assurance is a holistic method of studying, identifying, rectifying, and resolving problems within the educational system to ensure continuous quality improvement. Quality assurance, on the other hand, refers to a continuous process of evaluating the quality of a system, institution, or program. Quality Assurance can also be defined as systematic

monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of projects, services, or facilities to maximize the outcomes of investment made. It is also the process of verifying or determining whether the product or service rendered meets or exceeds expectations (Ogunleye, 2013). Supervisors and inspectors ensure quality assurance in schools in terms of teaching and learning process, yet the required support for teachers at the school level is not adequately provided.

3.3. Needs for Quality Assurance in Primary School Education

Quality assurance is a function that can be performed in various degrees and various forms in any school organization (Saraph et al., 1989). It also perceived quality assurance as a total improvement of education as a program. The need for quality assurance in primary schools cannot be overemphasized to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. However, the following are the major needs for quality assurance in primary school (Sunday, 2011).

- (i) It serves as an important component of quality control strategy in education.
- (ii) It determines the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size (Sunday, 2011).
- (iii) It ensures that teaching and learning are conducted in a child-friendly environment (State Universal Basic Education Board, 2012).
- (iv) It assists in monitoring and supervision of primary education
- (v) It determines the quality of the teacher inputs
- (vi) It ensures the availability of adequate infrastructure and establishes functional units
- (vii) It brings about the provision of adequate and effective planning of primary education.

3.4. Procedures for Ensuring Quality Primary Education in Nigeria

The followings are the practical procedures for ensuring quality primary education in Nigeria

- (i) *Quality and Qualified teachers should be posted to schools.* The limited view of teaching as only presentation of knowledge no longer fits the current reality of learning, instruction should help learners build to use prior knowledge, develop attitudes, beliefs, and cognitive skills, as well as expand their knowledge base. Basic requirements for effective teaching and learning include: every class should be taught by qualified and competent teachers with a minimum of Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), no primary school learner should be taught in a class larger than 35; every learner should be continuously assessed to check that sufficient progress is being made; every learner should be able to participate fully in-class activities with the support of the teacher; every learner should have access to appropriate instructional materials and all learners with special need should have an appropriate education. To have effective teaching and learning, there is a need for adequate preparation by the use of varied teaching methods and the selection of appropriate instructional materials. Effective learning involves supervision of the teachers' performance as well as supervision of the pupils' performance.
- (ii) *Adequate funding for primary education.* The major challenges facing Nigerian primary education and implementation of the curriculum at this level is funding amid rising demands and cost of education. For example, over some years, the country's funding for education continued to range between 5%, and 7% of the budgets of 2012,2013, and 2014 respectively. In 2018 the budget for the educational sector was N605.8bn which is 8.02% of the total amount of the year 2018 budget. In 2019, it was N620.5bn which marked 8.5% of the 2019 total budget. The budget for the education sector in 2019 is contrary to what the minister of education told the Nigerians, the government is working

to raise education budgetary allocation to 15%. For example, Ghana has in the last ten years never budgeted less than 20% for education. It has been known that the low level of financial allocation to the education sector which is below 26% of the total budget certainly affects the implementation of government policy on education in the country and particular operations of the Universal Basic Education since its inception. The proportion of funding in the primary educational investment should rise and governments should strive to provide children with access to free textbooks and exempt them from miscellaneous expenses.

- (iii) *The monitoring unit of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should be reinforced.* Monitoring is a way of checking and ensuring that the state of planned content, inputs, processes, and product in a primary school is implemented. It allows for appropriate remedial actions to be taken when deficiencies are discovered. Monitoring is carried out to ensure the laid down policies and objectives in the educational system are implemented in line with stated objectives. Therefore, it is a vital process once educational programs are to be assessed and regulated.
- (iv) *School Inspection should be timely and adequate.* The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) specifically requires schools in the country to be inspected. Inspection is a way of determining whether available facilities and resources in schools meet prescribed standards. It is both for assessment and advisory purposes. The major activity of inspectors of education is to help their professional colleague-teachers and headmasters to do their work better. In their interactions with school personnel, inspectors help to improve teaching and learning quality and standard of education. Through the inspection of the school necessary advice is given for the improvement of the school.
- (v) *School supervision should be thorough.* Supervision is a way of advising, guiding, refreshing, encouraging, stimulating, improving, and overseeing school activities to make necessary suggestions for improvement (Nkechi *et al.*, 2013). Thus, supervision in school means that the laid down rules, regulations, and principles are followed to maintain the minimum standard laid down for the schools are carried out effectively and efficiently. In this case, our primary schools need to be supervised effectively by taking into cognizance the following areas: the nature of the lesson plan, lesson presentation, reference materials, classroom management, and personality of the teacher. This will ensure qualitative, functional, and relevant education in primary schools.
- (vi) *Unit of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should be enhanced.* Evaluation as a procedure for ensuring quality education that involves collecting viable information on what has been achieved as a result of some program activities in the schools. It is also a process that involves identifying the decision to be made, and gathering and analyzing available educational data that can be used for decision-making. Educational activities need to be evaluated when it is ongoing to guide the development of the program. This type of evaluation is known as formative evaluation. There is a need for this evaluation to be carried out to ensure the standard and quality of primary education. Most of the time, those concerned with the responsibility of overseeing primary education fail to double their effort to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of schools' activities. This may consequently compromise the standard and quality of primary education. The overall primary school activities need to be assessed periodically. This is aimed at testing the level or degree of understanding of students and also leading towards grades, reports, or certificates.
- (vii) *Entrepreneurship education should be included in the senior primary classes curriculum.* The term entrepreneurship is a derivative of the French word "entreneur" meaning a

person who undertakes the development of a new enterprise or a new venture at some risk. On the other hand, entrepreneurship education is the education that embraces skill-building programs, creative thinking product development, and market, negotiation, leadership training, and wealth generation. There is a call for the introduction of entrepreneurship education in primary education. It is believed that when properly implemented in Nigeria primary schools, in addition to helping tomorrow's adults to establish their small-scale businesses, it will also equip them with the knowledge of how entrepreneurial firms operate. Talking about its relevance, Recipients of entrepreneurship education will also learn the skills that are necessary for various and changing challenges they face in their lifetime. The dwindling economic situation and resultant massive unemployment of youth and adults, the eroded moral fabric, and the need for indigenous science and technology indicate that there is a need for free and self-reliant education for children of school age. This self-reliance education has a major role to play in Nigeria's march towards realizing the mission transformation agenda. The Federal Government of Nigeria has directed all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria to introduce the study of entrepreneurship as a compulsory course for all students, irrespective of their discipline. Here we are calling for the acquisition of skills through entrepreneurship education for sustainable development of an individual in particular and the nation as a whole.

- (viii) *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in senior primary classes should be thought.* Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are influencing all aspects of life, especially education. Information and Communication Technologies help to expand access to education and motivate students to learn. ICT enables a teacher to reach out widely efficiently and effectively. It helps teachers and institutions to be more modern and dynamic. ICT has a role to play significantly to primary school students. This is because, since it is a modern way of communication, it can provide the individual opportunities to access many learning materials around the world. ICT at present occupies a crucial role in developing the teaching-learning process in the primary school environment. Going by the extent, to which the ICT has in primary schools, we can say that, the modern way of passing information had a significant impact on sustaining quality primary education.
- (ix) *Accountability in Education.* Rasche and Esser (2006), views accountability as the readiness or preparedness of a person or an organization to give an explanation or justification to relevant stakeholders for one's judgments, intentions, acts, and omissions when called upon to do so. Accountability in education is the answerability to one's actions in the educational system. Accountability in education is concerned with determining what records are to be kept, how such records will be maintained in terms of procedures, methodology, and forms to be used, in recording, classification, and summarizing of activities of events analyzing and interpreting the recorded data, preparing and issuing reports and statements with a given period. This will enable the system to sustain a qualitative primary education. An educational system exists to achieve the diverse objectives of education. The school administrator is accountable for the quality of the teaching-learning process in the school and is also expected to ensure that proper assessment procedures take place in the school.
- (x) *Parent Teachers Association (PTA).* A school considers being a social system characterized as a small society that is situated within a large community. The school has the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) as a member of school management who is in charge of all its functions. The managers must observe proper management practices

to achieve the objectives of the school. PTA is a formal body made up of parents whose children are officially registered as students in the school together with their teachers. The PTA aims to promote the public-private participation of parents and teachers in the education of their children. The Parent Teachers Association is an agent of the Ministry of Education and head teachers must work in conjunction with them through regular consultations. PTA was established under the Education Act of 1968, revised in 2012, and conferred the responsibility of promoting healthy working relationships between teachers and parents. PTA serves as a channel of communication between the school and the community. Parents advise on education needs as perceived by them and promote quality teaching and learning. They are expected to identify their school's short, medium, and long-term goals and quantify the resources required for the achievement of the school goals.

4. CONCLUSION

Quality primary education in Nigeria cannot be actualized with the total decay of educational facilities, lack of teachers' commitment, inadequate funding of education, less accountability in education, and lack of political support. Under-development should be the expectation of a nation where looting has become a political agenda. Promoting adequate funding for the educational system especially the primary education level is a key to national transformation and development. It is suggested that there is a need to enhance primary education through the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, monitoring of its leadership, teachers, and use of resources for education. There is need also to increase annual budgetary allocation to education from an embarrassing 7.5% in 2019 to at least.

The following are recommendations:

- (i) Qualified teachers should be posted to the primary schools to ensure quality and continuous improvement of primary schools.
- (ii) Adequate funding for primary schools should be ensured by the government at all levels to ensure the improvement of primary education
- (iii) Supervision and inspection should be timely and adequate as well as thorough
- (iv) Entrepreneurship education should be included in the primary school curriculum
- (v) Accountability should be reinforced to assure the standard of primary school is raised.
- (vi) Information and communication technology should be introduced to the primary four to primary six students

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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