ISSUES IN ACCESS TO BASIC QUALITATIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper focused attention on the various specialist in the field of education and how they defined and interpret education. The objectives of basic education as a sustainable development for life long learning and acquisition of numeracy skills are discussed. How can the basic education be qualitative and what are the missions of qualitative basic education to the Nigerian child. Access to the qualitative basic education are also discussed. Funds should be made available and enough competent teachers so as to stop the high rate of drop-out from schools. The basic education lays a sound foundation for literacy in this country if the blueprint is pursued concretely and consciously, there must be good management and intelligent utilization of human, capital and material resources to achieve the basic education objectives.

Introduction
Most specialists in the field of education have defined education variously based on their experience and background. The term education is capable of various interpretations just like any other terminology. For example, Fafunwa (1976) defined education “as a process by which one acquired knowledge, information and skill in order to be useful to oneself, family and the society at large”. This means that education prepares an individual for the future to be able to fulfill socio-economic and political obligations to oneself, family and the society at larger.

Again, Adaralegbe (1969) also defined education “as a process which enables a person not only to be able to read and write, but also to be proficient in a given job or occupation to enable him fit himself for living in a society”. This shows that education is the most powerful instrument of social change. It empowers an individual, economically, socially and politically.

Any basic qualitative education must be committed to total eradication of illiteracy and to awake the individual for all-round development of the human potentials. The basic education must be functional for the
Nigerian child to live a self-defendant and self-supporting life. Basic qualitative education must have financial backing and sufficient competent teachers and the high rate of dropout from schools must be stopped. There must be intelligent utilization of human capital and material resources so as to achieve the educational objectives.

Objectives of the basic education

Education is for sustainable life long learning and for the acquisition of numeracy skills. In the Nigeria context, basic education includes primary, Junior Secondary and Nomadic Education as well as adult education.

The national objectives which basic education seeks to achieve includes:

(a) Developing the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
(b) The provision of free basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
(c) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved relevance quality and efficiency.
(d) Catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provisions and promotion of basic education.

How qualitative is the basic education?

Since the launching of the universal basic education in 1999 by the then president Olusegun obasanjo which commenced nation wide as a positive reaction, it has inherited problems which militated against the effective implementation and the attainment of the desired objectives of the UPE and the 6-3-3-4 system of education which has not been tackled to create favourable conditions for the implementation of the UBE objectives.

To make the basic education qualitative, although funds are hard to come by, there must be strong financial backing and sufficient competent teachers enough facilities must be provided so as to avoid overcrowded classrooms and the high rate of drop-out from schools must be stopped. There must be intelligent utilization of human, capital and material resources directed towards the achievement of the said objectives. The cultural and religious factors that are hindering the progress of education in some parts of the country must be looked into. Relevant textbooks and working materials must be supplied to help effective teaching and learning.

Mission of the Basic Education to the Nigerian Child

The mission of basic education for the Nigerian child and the nation should visualize the creation of a whole some Nigerian child and citizen, patriotic, principled, and cultured. The mission should create an enlightened and satisfied citizens who would be eager to serve the society and the
human race selflessly. It should instill in the individual child such positive weapon that would empower him to serve his country with heart and might. The mission for basic education for the child is the total eradication of illiteracy in the life of the child and the production of literate citizens that would be well adjusted, human, self-reliant, productive and conforming to the ethics of education.

Thus, the mission of a qualitative basic education in Nigeria for the child should produce literate children possessing adequate skills, knowledge, attitude with requisite values for both their own good and that of the larger Nigerian society who would actualize what Jonathan (1993) described as in manpower services model of education” (P:10) A mission which stressed more than mere academic improvements of the childhood but also that which incorporate a combination of academic advancement and the pedagogy of teaching and education of others as a vibrant professional activity (Tal 2000:7)

A functional basic education is the right programme with mission for the Nigerian child. The mission of a qualitative basic education towards the child should be practical translation of ideas, realities and concepts into practical pragmatic actualities for the child. This suggests that the mission of qualitative basic education towards the Nigerian child should involve the practical step-by-step activities enumerated in the implementation guidelines of basic education of the Federal Ministry of Education. The mission should deal with the programme of the broad objectives of education through a meticulously devised pragmatic curriculum in accordance with the maturational levels of the child, using modern practical oriented teaching, and informal professional personnel – A qualitative education for the Nigerian child has to be built its foundation on the basic education.

**Access to the Qualitative Basic Education.**

1. There must be good management and intelligent utilization of human, capital and material resources directed towards the achievement of the basic education objectives.
2. Funds should be made available and enough competent teachers as to stop the high rate of drop-out from schools.
3. Cultural and religious factors that are hindering parents from sending their children to schools should be addressed.
4. The wide discrepancy in terms of educational attainment among groups in the community, such as between the poor and the rich, between men and women, between urban population and rural population and in the regions must be looked into.
5. There must be more educational facilities available evenly throughout the regions.
6. The believe that western education is sin (Boko Haram) in some part of the country must be stopped.
7. Free textbooks and exercise books should be provided throughout the regions.

Finally, we should know that childhood period is complex just as the adolescence. Therefore for a successful productive learning to take place, the child needs, among others, food, shelter, rest, sleep, exercise, love and security, success and a feeling of importance. Also, the child must learn to face the realities of life in the school. The child's social training helps him to face life, as he learns to work and play with others in the class, and learns to take his turn and to help other children. (Grant, 1976:26).

Problems of Qualitative Basic Education.

Since the commencement of the basic education in 1999, the objectives were not fully realized due to problems such as financial constraints, insufficient competent teachers, overcrowded classrooms, narrow curriculum content and high rate of drop-out from schools. The concept of management was poor as there was no intelligent utilization of human capital and material resources directed towards the achievement of the said objectives.

Apart from these problems, we have the following challenges:

1. Education attainment of Nigeria's population is still very low.
2. The movement of Boko haram that western education is sin is bringing set back in education especially in the north.
3. Cultural and religious factors are hindering the progress of education in some parts of the country. North in particular.
4. Dynamics in population structure has not been fully solved in education development.
5. There is still a wide discrepancy in terms of educational attainment among groups in the community, such as between the poor and the rich, between men and women, between urban population and rural population and in the regions.
6. Educational facilities are not yet available evenly throughout the regions.
7. The quality of education is still relatively low and does not meet the competency need of the students.

Solutions to the Problems of Qualitative Basic Education

The basic education, if well implemented will set Nigeria on the path to greatness. As a result of this the government should provide the needed skills and abilities thereby laying the foundation for life-long education. The basic education teachers should be very knowledgeable of the difference in the levels of growth and development of the child. By so doing, knowledge and skills acquired by the child will spur him to contribute to himself and the society and national development: The problems of financial constraints, insufficient competent teachers and overcrowded classroom should be looked into. The narrow curriculum content and the high rate of drop-out
from schools also should be solved. The cultural and religious factors which claimed that western education is sin in some part of the country should be stooped.

Conclusions

From all indications one can conclude that the development of a nation revolves around a literate society. The basic education, according to the joint declaration and the group of E-9, is out to wipe out illiteracy and promote literacy in the child for national development. The basic education lays a sound foundation for literacy in this country if the blueprint is pursued concretely and consciously. Also to have access to qualitative basic education there must be good management and intelligent utilization of human, capital and material resources to achieve basic education objectives.

Recommendations

To make the basic education qualitative, more funds should be made available.
Competent teachers should be employed.
More facilities should be provided.
Relevant textbooks and working materials should be provided so as to make teaching and learning more effective.

References


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