

MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSIFICATION AT PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN NIGERIA BY THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the diversifications at the primary education level in Nigeria. The paper discussed the concept of primary education in Nigeria. The paper actually X – rayed ten different diversification or strategies or techniques that can aid improvement on primary education in Nigeria. These diversifications include: (1) provision of adequate human resources. (2) Provision of adequate material resources. (3) Provision of adequate financial resources. (4) Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision. (5) Curriculum innovation. (6) Class Repetition. (7) Moral reorientation. (8) Dispensation of discipline in schools. (9) Time management and (10) Teachers' welfare. The paper concluded with a passionate appeal for the adoption of the suggested diversifications in order to overcome all the bottlenecks found in primary schools in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Primary Education, Class Repetition, Curriculum Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Primary education is the first level in education. It is the foundation of education upon which all other levels are built upon. It is the education for children between the ages of 6 and 11⁺. The major aims of primary education are:

- To inculcate permanent literacy (ability to read and write) and (2) to prepare the recipient for secondary education (FGN, 2004).

To diverse is to give variety to something for an improvement. So diversification at primary education simply means to seek alternative ways, means techniques, methods and so on to aid achievement of the major aims of primary education. Why diversification? We diverse when there is the need for an improvement.

Today, the aims of primary education are rarely achieved in our public primary schools. It is no longer newsworthy to hear that a primary six pupil could neither read a simple passage in primary two English Reader nor write ABCD-Z or to spell the word "Nigeria". To worsen the whole thing such pupils are pushed to junior secondary schools. A call to diversify at primary education level is a welcomed idea if the diversifications will be implemented.

The problem of education in Nigeria is not in policy making, but in policy implementation. The management of the diversification of primary education level is in the hands of the school head-teachers the communities, the Local Education Authorities and the various state governments. The various diversifications in this paper if properly management by the concerned authorities will actually bring about tremendous improvement in primary schools performances in all spheres of school life, such diversifications include:

- Provision of adequate human resources
- Provision of adequate material resources
- Provision of adequate financial resources
- Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision
- Curriculum innovation
- provision of room for repetition
- Moral re-orientation among the staff and pupils.
- Dispensation of discipline in schools
- Time management
- Teachers' welfare.

CONCEPT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Primary education is the education given in institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus. It is the fundamental and foundation of every other education system (FRN 2004; 14). Its duration is six years, it is relatively compulsory in Nigeria. Since pre primary education is still voluntary, primary education is the first formal exposure to education for many Nigeria children. A high premium is placed on this level of education to the extent that federal government of Nigeria in National policy in Education declared that it is the key to the success or failure of the whole education system since the rest of the education is built on it.

OBJECTIVES OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Objectives of primary education as stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004; 14) are to: a. Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively.

- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society.
- Provide the child with tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

The above objectives are laudable and lofty enough but will only be achieved when the prevailing factors hindering the effective teaching and learning in primary schools are tackled through effective management of diversification at primary education level.

MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSIFICATION AT PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN NIGERIA

Management of diversification at primary education level has to do with new strategies or techniques to be used in order to see that the lofty objectives of primary education are achieved. Such new strategies, techniques or diversifications include the following:

In provision of adequate human resources in our existing public primary schools. The official Teacher Pupils ratio in Nigeria as contained in National Policy on education 2013 is 1:35 for effective teaching and learning to take place. Nwakpa (2006) found that the teacher pupil's ratio in Ebonyi State was 1:70 as against 1:35 recommended by FRN (2004).

And Anukam (2001) found teacher-pupil ratio in Imo State to be higher than the federal government recommendation in the National policy on education 1998 edition.

The only remedy here is to ensure full compliance by every state government in terms of teacher pupils' ratio.

- Adequate provision of material resources. Material resources in primary schools constitute school buildings, offices, classrooms, libraries, text books, benches, chalk boards and so on. Many researches have found that many primary schools in Nigeria are inadequately provided with school materials. Nwakpa (2006) found that Ebonyi State primary schools were grossly inadequate provided with school materials. Bassey and Archibony (2001) in the same vein found inadequate material resources in cross River state. In 2008, Ekemezie found inadequate material resources in Nigeria primary school. The importance of material resources in any business venture, primary schools inclusion can not be one emphasized. No meaningful achievement can be made in the absence of adequate provision of material resources the new strategy or diversification could be that the head teachers should look inward, make some improvisations, make effective use of the P.T.A levies, involve the communities in the administration of the schools, use direct labor to do most of the school works, organize launching for specific project and so on in order to ensure that the aims and objectives of primary education are achieved.
- Provision of adequate financial resources: Availability of adequate financial resource is a life wire to every business venture public or private. No matter how lofty and laudable your business plans might be, they cannot be achieved without adequate provision of money. The issue of poor funding of primary education in Nigeria is as old as Nigeria herself. All the experiments we have been doing in our primary education have never succeeded because we have never matched our words with finance. The entire universal primary education scheme from 1976 till date has never succeeded not because of poor planning but because of poor funding.

Ekemezie (2008) opined that primary schools in Nigeria are not properly funded and this has affected teaching and learning adversely. Ekemezie (2008) maintained that because of improper funding, all the basic amenities that are supposed to be provided by the government declaration in National Policy on Education (2004) are not provided, and such services are; school library, basic health scheme, counseting, educational resource centre and so on.

Really, lack of such resources has adversely contributed to poor teaching and learning in our primary schools. To improve on this, the new strategy, technique or diversification should be to look for alternative sources of funding our primary schools. In this regard, Enyi (2001) suggested that communities could be used to erect schools buildings through direct labour especially if the government has provided the building materials. We could use fund raising approach to fund some major projects in schools. The school management and the P.T.A could appeal to well financially placed individuals

in various communities to assist in the infrastructural development of their community primary schools.

The recommendation of UNESCO that every nation and state should allocate 26% of her annual budget to education should be implemented without further delay, and if this is done, the public primary schools in Nigeria will automatically wear fantastic new look in all ramifications.

- Provision of adequate monitoring and supervision. It is a known fact that primary schools in Nigeria are not properly supervised or monitored by the concerned authorities. The teachers and pupils go to school at their convenience and teach whatever they wish to teach. Nothing serious is happening in our public primary schools. Children found in public primary schools today are regarded as children from very poor parents. To support the above assertion, Ekemezie (2008) found that instructions are not properly supervised in primary schools, and that primary schools are not visited by supervisors as it should be.

To arrest this ugly situation, the supervising agency of these primary schools, the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) should sit up and see that proper supervision is carried out in all the primary schools under their jurisdiction. The communities or villages where these schools are located can help in this regard through their participation in the school Parents Teachers Association (PTA). They can form monitoring teams to checkmate the activities of the teachers and pupils and even that of the head teachers. The head teachers should see supervision of instruction as their major job, and thus embark on it seriously.

- Curriculum innovation. The major two aims of primary education are
 - To prepare the child to be able to know how to read and write and 2. to prepare the child for secondary education, and to be followed by moral and scientific up bringing at this level. We should narrow the curriculum to those few areas, and expand their knowledge when they get to the secondary school level.

So at this level attention should be given to the teaching of English language, Mathematics, Elementary science, Moral instruction. These four subjects should be taught on daily basis, while any other subject could be taught as elective.

- Class Repetition: Repeating class means that those who fail at the end of an academic year should be allowed to repeat that class. The idea of mass promotion to the next class is very unhealthy to quality education. It does not encourage hard work, and does not promote quality education. What is the reason for examination if those who fail are not allowed to repeat at such examination? Mass promotion in our primary schools has made nonsense of school examination Repetition makes pupils/students to be very serious with their studies. The more one repeats, the more one learns and improves.
- Moral reorientation. In 1960s and even in 70s, teachers were seen as custodians of morality and discipline, but what we are seeing today is a total contrast. Today, primary school teachers, virtually indulge and practise immoral things and various other vices such as raping their female pupils, absenteeism, lateness, poor teaching, examination malpractice, smoking, alcoholism, extortion etc. The presence of these vices in our primary schools calls for moral reorientation especially among the teachers to re-educate them on their moral conduct so as to lead them to moral rebirth. One Igbo adage says “when the mother goat is eating grass, the children watch her and emulate her”. Thus, when teachers’ indulge in vices, the pupils watch them and copy them. This is the beginning of the societal vices. Any learning or knowledge that is devoid of morality is not worth while to improve our

primary schools; there is need for moral reorientation and rebirth among our primary schools teachers.

- Dispensation of Discipline in schools. Nwakpa (2006) said that discipline means the ability to respect constituted authority and to observe established laws and regulations of any organization, while indiscipline is regarded as any act that does not conform to the societal values and norms. There are many types of indiscipline in our primary schools to include: Truancy, absenteeism, poor teaching, sexual immorality, extortion, poor supervision of teachers and so on. The above listed vices in our primary schools need to be checked, controlled and stopped through dispensation of discipline by the concerned authorities starting with the head teachers of various schools.

To improve teaching- learning and the quality of primary education, all those that perpetuate indiscipline in school must be brought to book without fear or favor. Life devoid of discipline is not worthy of living. A teacher devoid of discipline is not supposed to be a teacher. A teacher is supposed to be a role model, a character molder and a soldier of disciplinary conduct, but the reverse is now the case. It is not yet too late, something can still be done, and that is, all hands must be on deck. The supervising agency of primary schools should hence forth see that discipline is maintained in schools by making sure that any person, starting from the head teachers down to pupils who contravene the school law or regulation is appropriately punished to serve as a deterrent to others.

- Time management: Time means, nothing if not attached with goals or objectives, and goals/objectives are strictly attached with time. So when a goal is set, there is a time frame within which that set goal should be achieved. For instance, the first goal or aim of primary education is to inculcate the ability of reading and writing in the recipients of primary education within a time frame of six years. So, this goal can be measured only after six years of schooling in the primary school.

Time is a very important resource and so, should be properly utilized. Time management is bad among many educational administrators in Nigeria. According to Omolaloye (1997), Nigerians seemed to be in the 18th Century when the rest of the world is moving on to the 21st century. The worst trait in time management is lack of punctuality followed by lack of regularity.

Observations show that primary school teachers, head teachers and their pupils are always found along the roads or on streets sluggishly going to school around 9.00am when the second period is already ending. There is high rate of lateness and absenteeism in our primary schools today because of poor time management in our primary schools. The question is how can you achieve your goal or objectives when you toil with your allotted time? It is not possible.

To arrest this cankerworm, it calls for proper monitoring of schools and the activities of every teacher and even the head teachers, and meting out adequate punishment for every defaulter, such as surcharging, suspending or outright dismissal of teachers.

When teachers are handled, they will in turn handle the pupils.

To actually, achieve this, there should be reorientation, re-education, workshop or seminar for teachers and their heads on "Time Management".

- Teacher welfare: To improve on primary education in Nigeria calls for a serious diversification on the welfare of teachers in primary schools. In Nigeria, people take teaching in primary schools as a stepping stone to a better job or instead of being idle. The image of these teachers is nothing in their communities. These teachers are holders of

Nigeria Certificate on Education (NCE) but people with Senior School Certificate (SSC) serving as clerks in other sectors of the same economy live better and are more respected in the society. Why should it be so?

The government is the cause of all the mishappenings in our primary schools simply because the government refused to take adequate care of the teachers who can make or unmake the entire society. To arrest the situation, the government should first of all professionalize teaching in Nigeria and those teachers as professionals should be paid as they pay nurses. Treat these teachers better than politicians or nurses. Government should treat or take the teaching profession as the No. 1 and to be followed by the medical profession, all the anomalies in primary schools and other levels of education will miraculously disappear to the benefit of the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author of this paper strongly recommends the following:

First and foremost, adequate human and material resources should be provided to our primary schools. Secondly, the government should take primary education in Nigeria very serious and ensure that teachers are adequately taken care of. Thus, all the discussed diversifications are upheld.

CONCLUSIONS

Having understood the plight of Nigeria primary schools, the adoption of the ten diversifications discussed in this paper will serve as a Panacea to all the bottlenecks found in Nigeria primary schools.

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