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## **THE PROBLEMS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

No doubt primary education serves as the hub of individual and societal development in Nigeria and other places of the world. Considering its multidimensional roles, parents, teachers, government and other stake holders must be prepared to take their responsibility serious. Unfortunately the parents or the family and the government which constitute the concern of this study cannot be deemed to have credibly carried out their functions. The parents are blamed for engaging their children in economic ventures rather than providing them the needed facilities to carry out their studies. In the same vein government cannot escape being

blamed for poor funding and quashing of educational treaties which would have improved the primary school system.

Therefore, if the primary school must live up to expectations, the family and the government must be up and doing.

1. what is primary education?;
  2. is primary education relevant to the overall development of the child?;
  3. is primary education relevant to the development of the society?;
- and
4. are their challenges facing primary

The concept primary education is commonly observed to be an education given to children within their late childhood. This view may justify why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004b) in her National Policy on Education defined primary education as the education given in an institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus. It

went further to explain that the rest of the education system is built upon it and is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. Since mention is made about what happens after primary education there is the need to look at what happens before primary education of the child. It is noted that the education before the child commences primary education is commonly described as 'early childhood education' or pre- school education. Its definition has attracted different interpretations by different people and societies. The perception held by an individual or society determines the practices and the ways early childhood education is organized. In attempt to define early child education, Lawali (2008) conceptually refers to it as the education an individual receives at his earliest years of life. Corroborating the view of Lawali,

Odigie (2012) explains that it is the programme of studies providing opportunities for genuine learning to children between the ages of 0-5 years prior to their entering the primary school. The blanket definition as proposed by Lawali and Odigie may mean that it covers the child education from 0-5 years.

## **CHALLENGES FACING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

From the on-going no one can argue that primary education is not relevant to the overall development of the child and the society. The accounts rendered so far indicate that primary education greatly contributes to national development. Ideally, one expects that since it is a viable tool for societal growth and development it would have faced minimal problems. Unfortunately, the problems appears to be many thereby obstructing its chances

to fully contribute to the betterment of the society. The problems emerge from many sources. The route of such problems can be traced to the teachers, school managers, families, government among others. Considering these sources, the government and the family seem to be responsible to almost all the problems that devastate the primary school system. On this note therefore, this section is dedicated to determine the ways government and the family contribute towards the problems of primary education in Nigeria.

1. The family: The acquisition of primary education by the child is dependent on the family. It is the family that presents the child for primary education. Perhaps it is this view that made Ezekiel-Hart and Adiele (2008:7) to say that no matter how highly qualified the teachers are, and no matter how

sophisticated the infrastructure, the quality of obstructing primary education from being as relevant as possible to the child and the society at large. This view may not be completely correct.

However government can be held responsible for committing some fouls. The reckless manner government handles issues related to primary education justifies the statement made by Anero (2011) who describes government as being political, only a policy maker, a powerless supervisor and squander of meaningful programmes targeted at improving the services rendered by the primary school subsector. The view that government is not meaningfully committed to demonstrate sagacity and doggedness in implementing policies and programmes to improve primary education has many proves. Some such prove is the inability

of the colonial government to promptly redeem their pledge by failing to issue grants-in-aids to the missionary schools within 1842-1872. The failure of the regional Universal Primary Education (UPE) programmes in the 1950's -1960's due to poor funding. The problems created as a result of the failure of the 1950's/1960's Universal Primary Education lingers in the minds of most educators as a monumental set back towards the development of primary education in Nigeria because the problems still hunt the success of primary education in Nigeria. Some such problems are overcrowded classrooms, quality of teachers, instructional materials, funding and many more. The 1976 national UPE programme did not escape the experiences of the regional UPE programmes in terms of funding and provision of facilities. The

inconsistency and disagreements among the different tiers of government on who funds and manages primary education within the late 1980's to the 1990's injected some degree of deficiency in the system. In all, the government is known for epileptic financial support to primary education and none implementation of treaties targeted at improving primary education even when they participate in signing such agreements. Examples of such treaties as reported by Federal Government of Nigeria (2000) are the Jointem declaration and framework for Africa on Education for All (1990), New Delhi (1991) declaration on E-countries, the Dakar (2000) Education for All (EAF) forum among others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings recorded in this study, the



following recommendations are made:

preparation given to students (inputs) [?] the family plays significant roles in determining the end products of the school system. Until the family is able and willing to perform their roles effectively, not much would be expected from the school in the overall attainment of quality education.

Contrary to the view expressed by Ezekiel-Hart and Adiele the family use the child as an economic tool thereby denying them primary education.

Commenting on this, Anero (2010) explains that it may be strange to most people that the child is considered as a tool of economic viability by some parents or families in Nigeria. Indeed some children are so much engaged in economic activities to the extent that they are denied the acquisition of any

form of education. In support to this view, Thomas, Abolade and Junaid (2004) explained that most parents know why they keep their children out of school. They explained that they are unwilling to surrender their exploitative strange hold on children whom they use for making money here and now. Outside the perception that children are used as economic machineries, some families do not also seem to ensure that the children they bring to school are provided with the demands of the educational needs of the 21st century. This is so because some parents have demonstrated unwillingness to provide their children with educational materials needed by their children and wards. Some of the ways the families shabbily attend to the educational needs of their children are:

A:most families refuse to send

children to school at the appropriate age;

B:some refuse to provide children's educational needs such as books, feeding, school uniforms, transport etc.;

C:good number of families are unable to follow up children to find out what are their academic challenges in terms of the child's areas of strengths and weaknesses; and

D:many are guilty of not providing good learning environments through the provision of libraries or reading corners