

ISSUES IN PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education as a major instrument for national development cannot be overemphasized. This implies that developments in the educational sector have far reaching impact on the private and national life and are therefore of serious concern to individuals and citizens of a nation. The current trend of teaching and learning in secondary school is one area that is giving serious concern. It is unfortunate that teaching and learning at this level of education is rather of quantity than quality. A lot of children just pass through the school system without anything to show for it. Several factors have been attributed to this low level of students' academic performance in recent times. These include poor funding of education, government's undue influence on teacher recruitment and posting, irregular payment of salaries, poor recognition accorded to teachers by the society, etc. This paper primarily is concerned with the issues of promoting quality education in secondary schools. The paper attempts to x-ray the role of some stakeholders in the education industry with a view to highlighting their significant impact on quality education delivery service for the nation. Finally, suggestions and recommendations are offered for quality education to be realized in secondary schools.

The issue of promoting quality education in secondary schools calls for concerted effort by all lovers of education. There are serious problems bedeviling the current situation of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Before quality education can be attained, both the private and public secondary school teachers must be committed. Parents have their roles to play as well as the proprietor and other school stakeholders in the education industry. The government as the major stakeholder in education must be alive to her responsibilities by providing enabling environment for teaching and learning.

Most secondary schools in the country are not better than primary schools. There are poor infrastructures and students learn under harsh condition. The classrooms are jam-packed with between fifty to sixty students. A good number of students either sit on the window, floor or five sharing a desk meant for three students.

Many proprietors and government instead of improving or maintaining the existing schools continue to open new ones. The introduction of UBE schools in some areas drained the existing secondary schools, since parents always prefer to send their wards or children to where the school fees are less. In most areas urban schools are over-staffed with qualified staffs while rural schools are under-staffed. Key subjects like English Language and Mathematics suffers in the rural schools because of the ministry action of bias posting of staff. In some schools subject masters in their area are overloaded in the school.

Finally, there are stories in the National Dailies about miracle centers where students pay huge amount of money to perpetrate examination malpractice. Until these trends are addressed, there will be no hope of quality education in schools.

Definition of Concepts

Education is defined in different ways by different authors. Education is defined as a systematic training and instruction of young peoples in the schools, college etc. as a means of acquisition to knowledge and abilities. It is the development of the characters and mental powers which results from that training (Ajima 1998. P. 143). In the same vein, Osiyelu (2004 P. 44) opined that education in a means to provide indigenous skills which will hasten economic development, scientifically and technological capabilities to enhance productivity in traditional sectors especially Agriculture. She further stated that education is a foundation stone which every development is built.

Fafinwa (1974) defined education as “the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develop the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are the value of the society in which he lives. That is to say that, it is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth for the disseminating knowledge to either ensure social control, to guarantee rational direction of the society or both”. This means that education helps individuals to attain his desired goals. Okafor (1987) defined education as all the experiences through which an individual acquire knowledge, idea, develops his intellect and strengthens his will. Experience, to him, encompasses all the information acquired through reasoning.

Education in its broad sense, is seen as one of the instrument for socio-economic development of a society. How has education faired in the onerous task in secondary schools? Knowledge of the past is prerequisite for better understanding of the present status of education in secondary schools in Nigeria.

It is stated in the National policy on Education (NPE) (2004) that the aims of education include:

- a. Inculcating of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and society.
- b. The training of the mind in building valuable concepts, general actions and understanding of the world around them.
- c. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical equipment for individual to live in a society.
- d. The acquisition of the relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world technology and
- e. Useful living within the society.

Specifically, therefore, secondary education is expected to among other things, raise a generation of people who can:

- a. Who can think for themselves.
- b. Take decision for self employment and achievement of excellence,
- c. Provide trained manpower in applied sciences,
- d. Express themselves numerically and literary and
- e. Develop problems solving skills, abilities and competence.

Quality Education: Quality Education emphasizes the worth and appropriateness of the recourse. According to Webster New International Dictionary of English Language (1986) it is the degree of conformity to standards and attributes that has been obtained after a certain level has been reached and inherent trait that make one some worth superior

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Cube (1968) viewed quality education from two perspectives; one way is to view quality within an educational system in the light of its own internal criteria, for instance, the performance of students in a standard examination such as Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). The other way is to view qualitative performance of an educational system by external criteria such as its fitness and relevance to the needs of its environment.

Which ever way it is viewed, the indicator of quality and efficiency need to be properly controlled by those in authority to do so in order to achieve other external and internal criteria as viewed by Cube (1968), there is a need for regular inspection and continuous supervision of instruction of educational promotion as laid down in the National policy of education and other relevant materials.

Thomas (1972), Yolaye and Nwagwu (1983) are of the opinion that “education system is a function of the quantity of inputs.

Promotion: Promoting is to raise higher level of encouraged the process of moving forward. Promoting quality education can then be viewed as harnessing efforts of individuals and groups to be used to encourage the process of raising education to attaining set standards (Eriba and Ode, 2007).

Teachers Role in Promoting Quality Education

Teachers are the center of all learning activities in the school; they can make or mar their students. In recent years, the state of education in Nigeria has been very poor, for nearly decades now, Nigerians are worried over the state of education in the country, for instance, Felua (1989) cited in Okoroma (2005:77) described the condition of education thus:

Primary school has virtually decayed. The secondary schools are congested. Both colleges of Education and polytechnics exist under their own shadow; the Universities are generally in shambles, Inspectors of education have withdrawn to secretariats, Teachers remain frustrated. Consequently, most certificates only possess face validity.

In the face of all these, poor condition of infrastructures and lack of commitment by the stakeholders in the education industry, the secondary education will continue to witness poor quality graduates.

Teacher’s role in promoting quality education cannot be over stressed, according to Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) (1994) documented the role of teachers:

In any Educational process, there always stands the teacher in front or at the back. The center or at the side, and what he knows and does can make a great difference and what he does not know, or cannot do or fails to do can be an irreparable loss to the child.

It is the teacher in the final analysis who translates policies into practices and programs into actions. The teacher is thus an indispensable element in the educational process of the child.

According to National Union of Teacher (NUT) documents the role of teachers to include among others:

1. To prepare lessons, and teach assigned classes, adequate up-to-date lessons notes should be written and followed.

2. To access records, and report students' work. They should be done with honesty and objectivity in the conduct of the relevant examination.
3. To guide students on issues related to their education and career
4. The teacher should play the role of guidance counselor.

Finally a teacher should do his work when needed with decorum.

The Roles of Principals in Promoting Quality Education

The school principal can be defined in many ways as viewed by people from different authors, Hornby (2001) defined him as the highest in order of importance who take a leading role, the chief person in authority and the most important leader of a school or college. Ozigi (1977) view the principal as the school administrator that could be called a variety of titles like Head Teacher, Adviser, Chief administrative executive, public relation man, curriculum director etc. The principal as a leader should possess leadership traits which include, maintaining good relationship with the students; they should present themselves in this regard as good models for students to emulate.

The principal should undertake the following activities in school to enable him promote quality of education.

1. Carry out curriculum activities such as designing, revising and implementing curricula with the participation of teachers.
2. Principal should allocate subjects of specialization to teachers based on their ability to teach them.
3. He should demonstrate classroom teaching from time to time, exhibiting new methods of teaching as they come up in workshops, conference of principals, seminars and short course.
4. The principal should see that teachers keep students lively through teaching, test and examination.
5. Supervise teacher's records to see that they are up to date.

Williams (1953) summed up what is expected of a successful leader as follows

- i. Courage
- ii. Will power
- iii. Flexibility
- iv. Knowledge and
- v. Integrity

The Last quality on which all other qualities has to based on is integrity which is what makes people trust one and have a reputation for justice and honesty with the other qualities mentioned above.

Role/Importance of Proprietor

Proprietor can be described as the owner of a private school, evidence are abound that privately owned school such as those owned by individuals, churches/church organization and local communities have always set the pace for promoting quality education. Most time, government come behind such proprietors in establishing school especially nursery, primary and secondary schools in various communities. This may explain why many states in the country are today an educationally disadvantaged or develop behavior of waiting for government.

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For this reason, another leader has recently challenged northern elites to invest in education “stressing that government alone cannot effectively stem the falling standards of education in the north” according to the leader “investing in education is quite expensive and time consuming but the rewards that follows are enormous because as proprietor of the school, the future of students lies in your hands of management of school which is very tasking”.

Vanguard Newspaper, (August 2, 2005), looking at the provision of the policy it would be very difficult to exhaustively itemize the role of a proprietor in promoting quality education in the environment.

It may be reasonably agreed, however that school proprietor should

1. Provide suitable facilities such as standard classrooms, laboratories, libraries, staff offices, health services etc. for proper teaching and learning to take place.
2. Ensure proper staffing of school especially with adequate number of qualified teachers and support staff.
3. Set up Parents’ Teachers Association (PTA) for the school.
4. Ensure payment of salaries as and when due.
5. De-emphasized making monetary gain by the school for the proprietors.

Conclusion

The paper concludes by giving suggestions and recommendations. Since the issue of secondary school education calls for concerted effort by all stakeholders, all hand must be on desk to improve the standard of teaching and learning.

One of the recommendations is that Government should provide each government owned and approved post primary schools with better qualified teaching staffs. Government should post qualified teachers to rural schools to enhance quality education. Maintenance of infrastructures in the existing schools should be given priority instead of opening new ones, the proprietors of schools should de-emphasize money gain and strive for quality education since education is the life blood of modern civilization. Finally, all stakeholders should cope with trends of modern civilization and development, qualitative education should be a thing of priority.

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