

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AS A BASIS FOR THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)
FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Hauwa Larai Ibrahim

*Department of Early Childhood Care Education,
Federal College of Education,
Kano.*

Abstract

The paper discussed on the early childhood education as the bases for achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the convention of the nation, education is considered as the basic right and key for individual development. Early childhood is referred to as the foundation of the child's growth and development of any nation, while MDGs is concerned in the developing the entire citizenry with a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to the various promotion. The paper finally has discussed on the early childhood education as the bases for quality basic education which is widely recognized as haven significant impact on the subsequent performance of children in basic education programme, thereby proffered recommendations and conclude that early childhood is the bases for achievement the objectives of MDGs for sustainability.

Nigeria is a state that is facing various challenges on the issues of quality of education from basic education to higher level, which is the foundation of national development. To ensure qualitative development in all fields of human endeavour and to ensure qualitative learning outcome for better national development, there is a need to provide the quality early childhood/Nursery education in schools and to ensure continuity in this area of early childhood education especially in this era of rapid population growth, increase in pressure on learning materials, teacher- pupils ratio, among children under the age of 5.

Similarly, providing quality basic education for all school age by the year 2015 is a commitment of many countries. This commitment arises from the basic convention of nations that education is one of the basic rights and at the same time the key for individual and societal development. Moreover quality basic education is foundation for education at subsequent higher

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declaration endorsed by 189 world leaders at United Nations (UN) in September, 2000 is a commitment for work together to build a more prosperous and equitable world. The declaration was stated into a roadmap setting out target

time bound and measurable goals to be reached by 2015. To help Nigeria in the attainment of some of these goals, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) acting from its point of strategic advantage developed eight (8) sector wide goals.

1. Provide and sustain unfettered access to education;
2. Assure quality education at all levels;
3. Promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction;
4. Ensure periodic review of curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society and the world of work;
5. Collaborate with development partners, private sector and local communities to support and fund education;
6. Promote Information and Communication Technology capability at all levels;
7. Promote gender equality and empower women;
8. Control the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of AIDS and promote adult literacy.

Early Childhood/Nursery Education

Early childhood education is referred to as the foundation for the children's growth and development of any nation. It encompasses the care, development and education of children below the age of 6 (NERD, 1996). Similarly, according to National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004, 11) Early

childhood education or pre-primary is the education given in an institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. Also Encyclopedia Americana (1989; 553) defines it as "a form of education for children three to five years of age prior to their entry to first elementary grade".

Objectives of Early Childhood Education, according to the National Policy on Education (2004 P.II) are:

1. Effect a smooth transition from home to school.
2. Prepare the child for the primary level of education.
3. Promote adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices)
4. Inculcate social norms
5. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploitation of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.
6. Develop a sense of corporation and team spirit.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a declaration endorsed by 189 world leaders at United Nations (UN) in September, 2000 as a commitment for work together to build a more prosperous and equitable world. The declaration was stated into a roadmap setting out target time bound and measurable goals to be reached by 2015. MDGs provides concrete numerical benchmark for tackling extreme

priority in many countries, it also provided a framework for the international community to work together towards a common end and making sure that human development reaches everyone, everywhere. If these goals are achieved world poverty will be cut by half tens of million of live will be saved and billions more people will have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy.

The eight MDGs breakdown into twenty-one quantifiable targets that are measured by sixty indicators.

- Goal**
- 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - 2: Achieve universal primary education
 - 3: Provide gender equity and empower women
 - 4: Reduce child mortality
 - 5: Improve maternal health
 - 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and diseases
 - 7: Ensure environmental suitability
 - 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

Millennium Development Goals Work Towards Achieving t Goals

The MDGs poverty reduces by half of the proportion of people whose income is less than one pound a day. It reduces by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. It works towards ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling, eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferable by 2005 and in all level of education no later than 2015.

MDGs also ensure that by 2015 children everywhere boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Literacy rate of 15 – 24 years old both sexes will be increase. Meet enrolment ratio in primary education both sexes parentage of pupils starting grade one reaching grade 5 boys and girls will be increased by 2015.

The net enrolment rate in primary education currently stands at 89.6%, mainly due to the efforts of UBE (Universal Basic Education), however, only 67.5% reached grade 5 transition rates to secondary school when skilled human resources are nurtured for both white and blue collar workers are also a challenge. The literacy rate for 15 – 21 years old has rise steadily since 2000, and currently stands at 81% (NBS Survey, 2005).

Millennium Development goals in collaboration with the World Bank support was able to carry out the following step towards meeting its targets.

- 1) Training of an additional 40,000 teachers nationwide under the Federal Teacher Scheme for deployment to the rural areas.
- 2) Training of 5,000 science and mathematic teachers.
- 3) Procurement of science kits for junior secondary schools.
- 4) Funded the visually impaired Basic Education curriculum as well as language.
- 5) Nomadic education with emphasis on health care.
- 6) Funding for in-service training for 145,000 teachers annually, etc.

A decade after the Millennium declaration we can point to some progress of MDGs in many countries. There have been noticeable reduction in poverty globally, significant improvement in enrolment and gender parity in schools, reduction in child and maternal mortality and increasing HIV treatment. Steps have been taken towards ensuring environmental sustainability and developing countries are incorporating the MDGs into their development strategies.

Basic Education

Basic Education is the Education received for a period of 9 years comprising 6 years primary/lower basic and 3 years upper basic secondary education as stated in section 3, subsection 16 of National Policy on Education, (2004). The basic education is compulsory, universal and free, and covers adult and non-formal programmes at primary and JSS level. Provides the quality primary education for all ages by the year 2015, is a commitment of many countries. This commitment arises from the convention of nations that is one of the basic rights and at the same time the key for individual and societal development Daniel, D. (2007). Similarly when we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a life time of productivity and responsive citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk.

National action plan articulated the reforms agenda for basic education by 2015 with the following objectives;

- a) Ensuring that by 2009 100% of all children of official age (5-11) will be enrolled full time primary education.
- b) Ensuring that by 2015 all children girls as well as boys of primary school age will be enrolled in primary school or its equivalent
- c) Improve by 2010 the school completion rate by 3% to an overall rate exceeding 90% of those in school.
- d) Ensure transition rate of 90% from primary to junior secondary school.
- e) Ensure that by 2015, 80% of children up to the age of fifteen will be enrolled in school or an equivalent education programme
- f) Reduce by 80% by 2015 the percentage of working children of school age while access to relevant basic education will be provided for children.

Objectives of Basic Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has formally launched Universal Basic Education Programme with the following objectives:

1. Developing the entire citizenry with a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to the various promotions;

2. Provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
3. Reducing drastically incidence of drop-outs from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
4. Creating for learning need of young persons, who for one reason or the other, have had to interrupt their school through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
5. Ensuring the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civil values needed for laying a solid foundation for the lifelong learning (FME;2000)

Early childhood education and pre-Primary education are widely recognized as having a significant impact on the subsequent performance of children in basic educational programmes. They lay the foundation for acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. They consider reduction in dropout and repetition rates and well managed, they generate a predisposition of child towards learning and attending school. Early childhood education programme is committed to preparing students to enter the field of early care and education with the skills needed to help children succeed not only in school, but in life. It also helps the child to discover why the early years are such important learning years and how they can play a positive role in the lives of children and families. Therefore, there is a need to re- strengthen effort to give quality childhood education. (Retrieved from [www.early childhood education. community.net](http://www.earlychildhoodeducationcommunity.net))

Early Childhood Education as a Bases of Quality Basic Education

The early childhood education will ensure smooth transition between basic schools and lay a foundation for lifelong learning. The pre-primary education operates in a more formalized or organized settings where children aged 3-5 receive early childhood education as a preparatory to enrolling primary schools (NERDC/UNICEF, 1996).

Early childhood education is the bases for quality basic education. The creative and initiative skills that children develop through play which they can build upon in their later life can help to improve the quality of basic education".

According to Shonkoff & Philips (2000), the future of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well being of the next generation. Today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents. When we invest' wisely in children and, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children-with what they need to build a strong foundation for health and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk. Similarly, the early development of cognitive skills, emotional well being,

social competence and sound physical and mental health build a strong foundation for success well into adult years. Therefore all aspects of adult human capital from workforce, skills, cooperative and lawful behaviour, build capacities that are developed during childhood beginning at birth.

Challenges of Early Childhood Education

For early childhood education to be effective towards improving the quality of basic education the following are the challenges facing the system.

1. Poor management of delivery system for quality of and access to pre-primary programme
2. Lack of policy and instructional frame work within the ministry of education to manage pre-primary education effectively
3. Dilapidated learning environment is one of the problems faced by most of our schools where children of that age need to be in a better learning environment which will facilitate learning.
4. Inadequate use of pedagogy in teaching of young children affect the performance of pupils in the school,
5. Inadequate instructional materials. In most public schools there is shortage of instructional materials that will help the teacher to teach and help the learner to learn.
6. Inadequate qualified teachers to handle the pre-primary school pupils for effective teaching and learning in most of our primary schools.
7. Lack of pre-primary school teachers and materials development.
8. The existing system must be reviewed and a coherent capacity development, programmes should be developed and implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning in existing schools.
9. Problems of access to early childhood education and basic education schools which include cost of schooling, illness and hunger, and low quality of schooling.

Conclusion

The early childhood education will ensure smooth transition between basic schools and lay a foundation for lifelong learning. It has been conceptualized as encompassing the clear development and education of children below the age of 6, while the basic education is made up of 6 years primary education / lower basic level and 3 years upper basic. Therefore the paper identified objectives of early childhood education as, to effect a smooth transition from home to primary school, preparing the children for primary level of education among others. While those of basic education include, to develop the entire citizenry with a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to various promotions. In the paper, the following were identified as challenges, which include poor management of delivery system for quality of access to pre-primary programme, it has

also recommended creating conducive learning environment especially at early childhood education. Finally for any nation to achieve quality basic education, early childhood education should be given due consideration because it is the basis for any educational development.

Recommendations

1. Policy on the management of early childhood education should be provided
2. Provision of enough and qualified teachers to handle the early childhood education
3. Staff development strategies should be emphasized for early childhood education programmes
4. Provision of conducive learning environment particularly in the early childhood education schools
5. Provision of enough instructional materials
6. Avoidance of all obstacles for access to early childhood education schools.
7. Staff development on the field of instructional strategies.

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