

**THE ROLE OF QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

BY

**Iweriebor, Veronica, .N.
School Of Early Childhood Care And Primary Education
College of Education, Agbor**

Abstract

Education is an indispensable tool in nations building. It is a process and systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition and skills, potentials and abilities which will enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of ones society and nation. The purpose of education is to improve the quality of life of its people in the society. The foundation of any building will depend on how solid, how strong that building is able to stand the test of time. Qualitative Education for national development in early childhood Education must provide that systematic training and design that will transmit knowledge and acquisition of skills that will enable the child grow, develop and contribute to the development of his or her society. Besides, focus should be made on the importance of qualitative education in early Childhood Education. Also emphasis should be laid on the philosophy of early childhood education, the needs to improve self-esteem of early childhood teacher through giving them adequate training that will expose them to new challenges in early childhood classroom, such challenges should help them to operate simple computer games and other needed skills to proof their worth in the teaching profession. It involves all round development of an individual physically, socially, morally, intellectually and mentally (Osakwue, 2006). Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) has described early childhood care and Education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 years prior to their entering primary school. This is to say that early childhood Education is a special kind of education provided for children, in an institution. It can be said to be a "formalized educational process to which children between ages 2 Vi through five plus are subjected to designated early childhood care and education institution" (Mezieobi, 2006). Sustainable development means, to make the world a better place for every one without destroying possibilities for the next generation to live a happy and quality lives. It is the

development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.

Keywords: The Role, Quality Education, Early Childhood ,Sustainable National Development.

Introduction

Education is an indispensable tool in nations building. It is a process of systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition of skill, potentials and abilities which will enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of his/her society and nation. It involves all round development of an individual physically, socially, morally, intellectually, and mentally (Osakwe, 2006). One of the important research findings of 20th century was the recognition that early childhood and primary education stages play the key role in the development of the personality of children.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) has described early childhood care and education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 years plus prior to their entering the primary school. That is to say early education is a special kind of education provided in an institution for children, prior to their entering the primary school. Early childhood education, in the context of formal education can be said to be "a formalized educational process to which children between the ages of 2Vi through five plus are subjected to designated early childhood care and education institutions" (Mezieobi 2006).

Technology use in schools has influenced the way educators plan, design instruction, and assess their pupils. Innovations in educational technology have changed systems of communication, learning resources, lesson ideas, and professional development. Innovative technology facilitates creativity and learning productivity. Technology can consist of computer programs, internet programs, or other assistive, digital and communicative tools. Classroom teachers have integrated these forms of technology over time using a variety of methods through different methods and techniques of teaching (Nwabuwe & Singer 2014).

It is in accordance with the declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA, 1990) which was made in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and Bating clearly in Article 1 that every person -child, Youth or Adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed

to meet their basic needs. This declaration was reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children held in 1990, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2000 (Nwabuwe & Singer 2014).

Early Childhood Care and Education means the type of education, in quality and content, that is given in the first level of education which is from play class to nursery schools. This construct changes from country to country. In Nigeria, ECCE education was equated with 0-six years education. It is a policy reform measure of the Federal Government of Nigeria, that is in line with the state objectives of the 1999 constitution which states in section 18 that... *Government shall eradicate illiteracy; to this end, government shall as and when practicable provide a free and compulsory Universal Primary Education, free secondary education, and free adult literacy programmes* (FGN, 1999, FGN, 2000).

The Importance of Qualitative Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education has enormous individual, social and economic benefits. Early childhood programmes complement the roles of parents and other caregivers in raising children during the early years. The early childhood education sets the foundation for life, ensuring that children have positive experiences and that their needs for health, stimulation and support are met, and that they learn to interact with their surroundings.

Governments' interest in the economic benefits of ECCE is reflected in the African targets for early education, known as the African Targets. These targets, which were agreed at the Africa Union summit in 2006, simply set targets for childcare places for children aged 0.3 and 3 to mandatory school age, to be achieved by 2010. While such ECCE policies, which focus on employment and gender equality, are essential, they are unfortunately inadequate. There is need to go beyond the provision of childcare places to comprehensive services for children, that take the needs and the rights of children into account. This approach is supported by (UNESCO, 2007), which argues that early childhood programmes should have as their core objective the well-being and holistic development of children's capacities.

Purpose of Early Childhood Education Curriculum

The purposes are listed below

- To acquaint the child with basic scientific and technological skills
- * specifically, the curriculum intends to equip the child with the following skills: enquiry, intellectual, manipulative and societal values. Thus, teaching each topic of the contents, the

teacher should aim at inculcating the above skills.

- Inculcation of value re-orientation, civic and moral responsibilities as well as good family living
- acquisition of skills of poverty eradication
- laying of foundation for knowledge and application of ICT

In testing achievement in early Childhood education curriculum, the curriculum objectives of intellectual, enquiry, manipulative and social values skills must be given serious consideration. This is the gist that is capable of making the curriculum to achieve its purpose.

Intellectual Skills

This is the skill that enables the individual to clarify goals, examine assumptions, discern hidden values and evaluate evidences. Intellectual skills include observation, interpretation, analysis, inference evaluation and explanation. It helps the child to recognize problems and find workable means of reaching solutions. The implication in testing is that items must include graphs, diagrams, tables and figures.

Enquiry Skills

Aim to teach pupils about examining sources and making decisions on their usefulness in classroom context. The skills include ability to identify differences, question objective

situations, seek patterns, hypothesis, experiment, make sketches, measuring, recording and classifying.

Manipulative Skills

These are the skills which a person learns to handle objects with precision. It involves the use of hand and body to execute tasks. It is ability to manipulate things. Examples include throwing, catching, kicking, rolling, cutting and writing. It helps children develop fine motor skills. The child's small muscles (e.g fingers wrist and fine co-ordination are developed).

Societal Values Skills

Society is a self-perpetuating group of humans broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interest, participation in characteristics relationships, share values and common culture. What are Nigerian cherished values? They include high moral integrity, fair play, honesty, social justice, sportsmanship, hospitality and patriotism.

In planning a test, a blueprint must accommodate these skills. Questions or tasks should also be posed so as to call for the manifestation of these skills. The section of curriculum on evaluation guide is important in any attempt to correctly measure the objective of the curriculum.

Philosophy of Early Childhood Education

Every educational innovation has a philosophy, i.e the overall idea or viewpoint of its innovators. For early childhood education, the philosophy is that every learner who has gone through 9-year basic education should have appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and long-life skills, as well as the ethical and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning, as a basis for scientific and reflective thinking. It is expected that every teacher should key into this philosophy, such that it guides your thinking, lesson preparation, delivery and evaluation.

The early years (0-5) are crucial for the development of an individual and any support given at this stage helps to promote development. This period requires people who are knowledgeable, such as specialist care givers and teachers. This people need to be equipped for the task hence,

the need to train them in ECCE to be able to handle these children effectively. Care givers and teachers of young children should possess some of these qualities like enthusiasm, kindness, gentleness and tolerance.

Need to Improve Early Childhood Teachers' Self-Esteem

Teachers' self-esteem could be seen as the way teachers see themselves, comport themselves with their counterparts, in professions. Most of the time, they see themselves as poor and belonging to a profession where they really don't wish their children to get into. The reasons are not far-fetched from the poor wages of teachers the conditions of service and poor environment where they work. Teachers in Nigeria are poorly paid and this is one of the reasons why they hardly had access to good health, decent accommodations and find it very difficult to give their best in the teaching profession.

Besides the above mentioned points, most basic school teachers lack the skills to fully utilize some of the modern technologies in curriculum implementation as such, the traditional chalk and duster approach still dominates in ECCE school pedagogy.

Education for Sustainable National Development

Concept of Sustainable Development What is Sustainable Development?

According to Ogburn (2017) sustainable development is the kind of Education which can continue for a long time with progressive improvement in quality and quantity. It is the growth of national development no matter how gradual, so that it becomes more advanced, better, stronger and long lasting without reduction in quality and quantity.

Sustainable development means to make the world a better place for every one without destroying possibilities for the next generation to live happy and quality lives. It is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs.

Sustainable development is organizing principle for meeting human development goals while sustaining the ability of natural system to provide the natural resources and services which the economy and society depend.

On the other hand, education is to improve the quality of life of the people in the society. This means that education prepares people for how to live and how to earn a living in order to obtain quality life. The society is very dynamic, therefore, the education being provided must be dynamic. "

The purpose of education is not only to increase the amount of knowledge but to also create the possibilities for the learner to invent, discover, to create people who are capable of doing new things and adapt to the changing world. For this reason, we must change our hierarchical positions to become more aware and adapt to the changing times. Good enough, we live in a world where information is always just around the corner. We as teachers should stop, think and ask ourselves - why do we do what we are doing? What is the purpose of teaching what we teach? Of what use are subjects we teach to the learners and the nation? What is the relevance of the curriculum contents to the individual and to national development. Once we are not able to establish the relevance then we are teaching the wrong thing, or using the wrong curriculum method. No matter how far one has gone, when one discovers that one has missed the way, the best option is for one to turn back and follow the correct route.

The correct route should be to approach the curriculum interpretation and teaching strategies with sustainable development mentality of teaching for relevance, such as;

- respect, value and preserve the achievement of the past.
- appreciate the wonders and the people of the earth.
- » live in a world where all people have sufficient food for healthy and productive life.
- assess, care for and restore the state of our planet
- create and enjoy better, safer and more just world
- be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities, locally, national and globally. (Obanya 2014)
- operate and adapt to modern society of

technology and ICT.

- live in harmony with fellow citizens and contribute to nation building etc.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the role of quality teaching and learning in Early Childhood/Primary Education for national development has a transferring power in preparing children/pupils in meeting the innovations in the global arena. The present age of technological advancement has brought changes into virtually all human endeavour including the teaching and learning process in Early Childhood/Primary Education. The primary function of education is to facilitate intellectual, moral and physical development of learners as well as moulding their characters to become better citizens. Teachers in Early years need to change their teaching approaches to reflect sustainable national development.

Suggestions

To build a sustainable national development.

- Skillful human resources should be put in place.
- Good tools for reliable services should be made available by the government, electricity should be improved for the maintenance of the equipment provided.
- Government should empower teachers through regular retraining to enable them empower the pupils.
- Sustainable development should be

added to the already existing courses of concerns in school curricular subjects.

- Curriculum innovation should address skill acquisition based on pupils abilities and interests.

References

- African Union (2006). Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015): Draft Plan of Action. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: AU, Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1999). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Lagos, Nigeria: Federal Government Press.
- Jomtien World Conference on Education for All. (1990). The Jomtien World Declaration on education for all.
- Nwabuwe, S.N. & Singer, E.G. (2014). Transformation Agenda: Challenges and Prospects of ICT in Teaching Physical Education in Basic Schools in Delta State. *Journal of Collaborative Research and Development (JCRD)*, 2.1.
- Nwabuwe, S.N., Nwabuwe, H.I. & Emuobonuvie, E.A. (2013). "use of Information and Communication Technology for Effective Teaching of Physical Education in Universal Basic Education: The Nigerian Experience". *Contemporary Journal of Educational Research (COJER)*. 3, 1. TETF PROJECT 2009/2010.
- Ogwuazor K.E. (2012). Effective Classroom Management and Control: A Booster for Qualitative Education. *Nigeria Journal of Education, Health, Environment and Technology Research* 3(1) January.
- Ukeje, B.O. (2000). Teacher Education in Nigeria: Current Status, 21st Century Challenges and Strategies for improvement in C.T.O. Akinmade, T.O. Oyetunde ed.
- UNESCO (2015) Teaching and Learning for Sustainable Future Retrieved from www.Unesco.org/...mod IShtml

