

**SPECIAL EDITION**  
**AJOSE**  
**AFRICAN JOURNAL OF STUDIES IN**  
**EDUCATION**

**VOL. 9, NO. 2, NOVEMBER 2013**

**ISSN: 0189 – 241 X**

# THE ROLE OF FUNCTIONAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SELF RELIANCE AND NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

EFEDI OBIAJURU EVARISTA

08034926532

&

MOEMEKE CLARA DUMEBI (PhD)

08037438405

Department of Curriculum Studies and  
Educational Technology  
College of Education, Agbor

## **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the role of functional primary education, self-reliance and national transformation in Nigerian. The paper explained the concept of education and its essence to humanity. The concept of primary education, its rationale, and what self-reliance stands for. It also highlighted the concept and role of functional education for effectiveness and efficiency. The goals and objectives of primary education as stated in the national policy were also stated to re-emphasize the aim of this paper. Giving a critical look at some factors that inhibit effective teaching in primary schools, the paper pointed out the issue of responsibility and control/funding, wide disparities in learning outcomes and school participation, gap between the content of teacher training programme and pedagogical skills required, poor teacher deployment, indiscipline/examination malpractice, policy issues and poor parental guidance/inadequate counselling services in schools. Touching its implications on teacher education development, the paper proposed some suggestions which include; a re-introduction of Teacher Training Colleges for TCII Certificate, proper training for appropriate knowledge and skills, increased incentives, professionalization of teaching, establishment of quality assurance unit, provision of adequate fund, sanitizing teachers' recruitment and deployment procedure among others.*

## **Introduction**

As an instrument of change, stability and cultural values for transforming, developing and sustaining the life of the people, education could be said to be the greatest hope and light of any nation as it is quite indispensable in the growth and development of a nation, (Efedi 2009). Education has been defined by many educationists hence we say that the definition of education is multifaceted. Okafor (2006), defined education strictly as the process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of his potentials, have

maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason' and to achieve perfect self-fulfillment. Education indeed, is a process of transformation and transmission of and acquisition of knowledge, values, skills, right attitude, formally or informally in a given society for a true and total development and emancipation of individuals and thus improving the society at large.

Moemeke (2011), stated that the mission of education that transverses nation and cultures includes the production of individuals who possess qualities necessary for becoming useful citizens as well as productive in the society. These aims she said pertain to creating awareness, developing responsible behaviour and capabilities for independent actions and making responsible productive decisions that have far-reaching effects on self and others. Therefore, as an indispensable instrument of transformation, development, stability, sustenance of people's life and self-reliance, an eye opener, right key that liberates individuals and societies, education should not be allowed to lie low but be given a very fertile soil-the primary school being the foundation, to grow, providing all the necessary infrastructural facilities, materials and manpower alike in adequate and appropriate quantity with serious governmental and parental attention for its growth and development. When the foundation of a house is weak, there is every possibility for it to collapse but with a strong and solid foundation the house fears neither storm, rain nor wind but stands the test of time firmly with confidence and taking wide strides unto greater heights.

This paper therefore, focuses on the concept of primary education, its goals, objectives and rationale as well as the concept and role of functional primary education and self-reliance. It also x-rays some likely factors that inhibit effective teaching in primary schools, its implication on teacher education development as well as what needs to be done to ameliorate the situation if functional primary education and self-reliance are to be attained for national transformation.

### **The concept of Primary Education and its Rationale**

Primary education, an aspect of the basic education in Nigeria refers to that foundation education of 6 years duration given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus upon which other education system is built and thus serves as the key to the success or failure of the whole system, (National Policy on Education,2004). Six years of age can be regarded as a good age for a child to be conscious enough of him/her self, environment and for a proper formal education programme to take off.

According to Ibrahim (2009), Primary education is the most dependable parameter for the measurement of the operational success of education at whatever

level. If for any reason this level is weak, the whole education system will automatically be weak; primary education being the bedrock of other systems and

the stepping stone of any nation's development. Of the three tiers of educational system in Nigeria, Maduewesi (2005), stated that primary education is the gateway to whatever individuals can achieve through education. In the same vein Agocha (1998), asserted that sound fundamental knowledge provides a baseline orientation for the developmental edifier which means that the success or failure of subsequent educational endeavor in a child's life, depends greatly on how effectively the primary education is handled.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1974) sees primary education as a means of liberating the great majority of people who are encased within rigid and inefficient traditional education. Supporting the above, Nwangwu (1984) asserted that primary education in a developing country like Nigeria could help individuals to adapt easily to the constantly developing environment and also serve as a means of reconciling traditional belief and practice with modernization.

### **Concept of Functional Education and its Roles**

Ogbonnaya (2013), defined functional education as education that is operational or practicable. Functional primary education therefore, should be that education which could equip the beneficiaries (the young school leavers) with practical knowledge, skill and values for their own benefit and their society. Functional primary education is that effectively acquired education that is useful to the child both within and outside the school. That education which gives the child the enabling ability to perform well in what is expected of him/her and also that makes the child to be useful to himself and to the society.

Functionality actually borders on usefulness, practicability and operational potentiality of the education that will enhance the child's effectiveness and efficiency in all he does for himself and the society. This is the education that gives the child a very solid base to either continue with his academic career or earn his living outside if he so desires. A functional primary education should be that education which will enhance good character, formation and development of sound attitude and morals in the child. It is that education that should enable the child have value for himself, other people, established culture and constituted authorities as well as having respect for the dignity of labour and corporate living. The education should also have the potentials of giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within his capacity and to earn his daily bread. The emphasis should

be on entrepreneurial skills through Vocational subjects like Home Economic, Practical Agriculture, Business Education etc and Technical Education.

Functional education should acknowledge learners' individual differences and should not subject them to the same curriculum but should allow them some degree of freedom in choice of what to learn that goes well with their talent and interest. In functional education, the child must be at the centre of the curriculum whose development is not based on principles that are exterior to the child. The teacher should have good knowledge of the child physically and emotionally before carrying out his teaching for the natural growth of the child. He must stimulate the child's interest in pursuit of his moral and spiritual needs so as to acquire knowledge through self-study and personal experiences instead of being spoon fed with foreign or abstract facts or ideas that are not relevant to the child's wellbeing (Zeilberger (1999), Okafor(1988) Dewey(1960).

There are some children that, after their primary six, cannot move to secondary school for some reasons and are faced with the challenges of survival. If the child has been well trained and groomed with the objectives of primary education fully articulated, the child can engage in meaningful work as a source of livelihood. Being able to read and write, he can reason well and perhaps engage in whatever business to earn his living. Functional education therefore, can help to solve the problem of redundancy, unemployment, armed robbery and kidnapping, harlotry or prostitution as it is said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

### **What is Self-Reliance?**

Self-reliance can be said to be an individual's ability to be self-dependent, self-actualized, self-sufficient, self-fulfilled and the ability to earn a living independently or with little or nobody's assistance in his/her life endeavours. Achugbu (2011), sees self-reliance as doing things for one-self rather than having things done for one. In the words of Mbanefo (1988), self-reliance involves setting people to utilize optimally more confidence in their own ingenuity and reduce their level of dependence on international organizations and foreign countries, while attempting to attain a better life for themselves. In the same vein, Egbon (1995), defined self-reliance as an agency and catalyst for economic recovery, since it raises among others, the social capacity of the country for technological problem solving, Also, Eregha (2011), stated that self-reliance implies inward looking and independent transformation of local environment for self-sustenance.

Self-reliance indeed entails the principle of independence in one's thought, action, decision making, problem solving as well as being in a position of caring for oneself and thus living freely in the society for one's own good. Functional primary education as a foundational educational stone, undoubtedly forms the bedrock of the development of capabilities for functionality and self-reliance towards national transformation politically, socially and economically,

Articulating some of the goals of primary education viz: “developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment as well as developing manipulative skills that will enable him/her function effectively in the society”(National Policy on Education,2004). Functional primary education becomes imperative as it helps one become responsible citizen having acquired thinking skills and relevant knowledge for useful living as they exhibit relative independence in critical aspects of life.

### **The Goals and Objectives of Primary Education**

According to National Policy on Education (2004), the goals that will form the basis of primary education in all the states of the Federation are as follows:  
To:

- (a). Include permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
- (b). lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (c) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (d). mold the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- (e). develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- (f). give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity;
- (g). provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

There is no doubt that these are very laudable and formidable goals for national development and transformation if only effectively pursued. The question now is:- How much of these goals have been achieved? To what degree of functionality and excellence are the primary school leavers? Are they only visible in the urban schools? How much of these goals are attainable in the rural schools? Are they actually realizable in the remote parts of the country? Are they being taken down to the grassroots for effectiveness and efficiency? What therefore are the challenges likely to inhibit effective primary education? What are their implications for teacher education development? How best can we improve the situation at hand?

### **Factors that Inhibit Effective Teaching in Primary Schools**

It is very sad to note that many factors try to inhibit or jeopardize functional primary education which has been accorded the fundamental human right to all citizens and an excellent tool with which people are equipped to solve personal and societal problems. Primary education being the foundation of all, has and is

being over flooded by many challenges. Mahmoud (2013) highlighted some problems facing educational development to include:

- Issue of responsibility and control/funding
- Incessant transfer of teachers/poor condition of service
- Corrupt attitude of our politicians.
- Indiscipline/examination malpractice of different dimensions
- Poor parenting/guidance/inadequate counseling services in school.
- Wrong training of teachers for effective primary education (Mahmoud 2013)

In line with the above stated problems, Olatunde (2013), scaling it down with special interest and focus on primary schools, highlighted the following issues which he said need to be addressed if the goals of primary education are to be met. They include:

1. Wide disparities in learning outcomes and school participation. Learning is with wide disparities between rural and urban schools where also you have high enrolment and performance than the rural areas where enrolment is low and participation also low.

Poor teacher deployment practices: - The national teacher pupil norm is set at one teacher to 40 children, i.e the ratio of 1:40, but there is inadequate and over supply of teachers within some schools in rural and urban areas respectively. Inappropriate deployment/distribution of teachers has resulted to urban schools being highly favoured with surplus teachers to the detriment of the rural schools which have the ratio of 1:70 or more to one teacher. Thus, breeds inefficiency and classroom ineffectiveness.

2. Poor quality of teaching and learning: - Teachers are not well equipped with basic pedagogical skills and understandings to teach well in primary school. Language policies are poorly implemented and children's learning is hampered by lack of appropriate textbooks and poor teaching style in introducing and developing literacy, mathematics and science concepts. Non provision of adequate teaching and learning materials as well as inability to create a physical environment conducive for learning has much to tell on effectiveness of primary education.
3. There is a gap between the content of teacher training programme and pedagogical skills required of primary school teachers. The content of initial training programme and that of in-service are mixed up to be same and not fully school based. It must also be noted that very few teachers have had access to regular in-service training, workshops or school-based teacher development. Many of them have never participated in any conference nor have they been opportune to acquire skills in problem solving on pedagogical issues.

4. Primary school teacher's salaries come from Federal allocation through the state government down to the local government councils. This allocation from Federal government is so bastardized along the line that primary school teachers' salaries are messed up with the result that education support service are being extremely constrained. The financing of primary education is thus not stable and teacher management practices are poor. Teachers are not guaranteed their promotion, regular salary and conducive school environment for good practice of the profession. These to a large extent, dampen their morale, increase irregular attendance to school and thus lower productivity with insignificant teaching output.
5. Implications for Teacher Policies-The national policy that sets NCE as the minimum standard for primary and junior secondary school teachers is not helping matters, but made the whole system clumsy-as it has failed to distinguish what a primary school teacher needs to know, what he is able to do from what is required from a secondary school subject specialist. This refers to different selection criteria and standards, as well as initial training appropriate to the environment, incentive systems and teacher monitoring and support systems that are appropriate to difficult environments.

### **Implications for Teacher Education Development**

To actualize the laudable objectives of primary education as stated in the national policy, the position, general development and education of the teacher cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are the key or chief implementers of whatever curriculum planned for the primary school. Efedo (2010), noted that no matter how adequate the objectives and content of any educational curriculum may be, its implementation is very crucial to its success, hence the pedagogy quality, quantity, readiness and commitment of the teachers as well as their capabilities in utilizing the necessary teaching materials and skills are very vital. Teachers are more involved in teaching/learning situation as they suggest appropriate methods, techniques, materials and having in-depth knowledge of both the content and learners they handle. Since the teachers plan instructional activities, scheme of work, subject matter units, lesson plans/notes and instructional materials and their effective utilization, the success of all these depend greatly on the teacher's commitment to his professional responsibility and more on his resourcefulness and ingenuity. The method that a teacher uses has the potential of promoting or hindering and sharpening mental activities, encouraging initiative and curiosity and thus lead to self-reliance and survival, (Ughamadu, 2013). Teachers need to be trained to actualize all these.

From the above assertions, it is penitent to note that teacher education development cannot be allowed to lie low if effective primary education is to be achieved for functionality and self-reliance. The initial training of teachers which involves different phases viz: theoretical aspect (content based) and the practical dimension through microteaching and teaching practice programme as well as in-



service training and professional development, should be held in high esteem and be restructured and made flexible so as to produce effective, functional and dedicated teachers for productivity in the primary schools. Efed (2013) stated that teachers should be availed with adequate profession and special training that will enhance their ability to make learners achieve set objectives i.e., achieving the learners' essence of coming to school as to be happy and be fulfilled.

Olatunde (2013), also stated that teachers for primary schools and teachers for secondary schools need very different kinds of training. While secondary school teachers need to be prepared to teach at least two main subjects, having in-depth knowledge of the subject content, understand how adolescents learn, and how to use English as a medium of instruction for effectiveness, the primary school teachers he said, need to be trained as generalists and equipped with skills in use of language(s) across the whole curriculum. Primary school teachers therefore, need to be trained and to know how to teach initial literacy in early grades in the main community/ Nigerian language, how to transit in upper primary to English medium and across the curriculum.

The primary school teachers need to be trained specially on how to organize learning in different ways such as children doing individual's learning tasks, children working in groups, participating actively in learning in addition to teachers using a variety of techniques, preparing instructional materials to support the textbooks, monitor each child's learning progress, organize and manage teaching in multi-grade teaching situation, as well as manage children of different abilities in a large class.

Preparing teachers to teach effectively in the primary schools requires decisions to be made as to what basics should be included in the initial training programme and what will be developed later through in-service development programme. Olatunde (2013), stressing different training programmes for new and in-service teachers, stated that in training teachers for primary education, the emphasis should be on knowledge of the primary school curriculum, teaching methods and materials, how children learn, the importance of language to learning and the methods of teaching mother tongue and English. The duration of programme should not be the same.

## **Conclusion**

For effective and efficient teaching in primary schools and to achieve result of functional primary education for self-reliance and national transformation, all the issues and challenges raised in this paper, must be given serious attention. The following suggestions also should as a matter of urgency be considered to bring sanity into the art of teaching for productivity and functionality. Emphasis must be placed on re-introduction of Teacher Training Colleges for Teacher's Certificate (II), and a serious revision/innovation in the curriculum of the tertiary institutions for teacher education programme. They should incorporate new courses towards enhancing functional primary education.

## **Suggestions for Improvement of the State of Teaching in Primary School**

According to Orocka (2007), quality education cannot be attained without appropriate funding, so also effective teaching in the primary schools cannot be attained except some of the following suggestions are properly addressed and implemented:

1. Special training for teachers to teach in primary schools: Teachers for primary education need to be trained in the relevant knowledge and skills appropriate for their job in the primary school for effectiveness. If knowledge according to Gupta, Lyer and Aronson (2006), is defined as “the content that is collated, analyzed and assimilated to provide a unique perspective that helps one to perform a task, solve a problem and stimulate the intellect; therefore, the teachers to teach in primary schools need a special training and should be equipped with the right and appropriate knowledge that will stimulate their intellect so as to be able to perform teaching properly and solve problems.

2. There should be a re-introduction of Teacher Training Colleges for Teachers certificate (Grade II) to truly groom primary school teachers as generalists and for school based on pupils' friendly skills. For further enhancement in the tertiary institutions, there should be clear separation of what a primary school teacher needs to know and be able to do. The content of initial teacher training programme and that of in-service programme need to be separated and be more school-based in approaches.

3. There is need for increased incentives for teachers to perform and improve teaching in the primary schools to meet the required standard. Their salary should be enhanced and be promptly and regularly paid. Hard work and dedication to duty should be handsomely rewarded. Award of honour should be given to deserving teachers to increase productivity and effectiveness. Regular promotion exercise should be put in place with the arrears and other allowances promptly paid to teachers in order to put smile on their faces. Thus, will increase their enthusiasm and motivation for work.

4. Teachers Registration Council (TRC) should as a matter of urgency work for full professionalization of teaching with edicts and ethics properly enacted to safeguard and uphold the status of teachers in the society.

5. Teacher's training institutions should stop admitting mediocre and strive to conduct proper in-take examination/ test and proper screening of candidates seeking admission.

6. The Ministry of Education should try to create quality assurance unit to be deeply involved in mapping out strategies to ensure effective and quality performance of teachers in primary schools through monitoring/supervision as well as provision of relevant and adequate teaching materials.

7. Government should provide adequate fund and monitor its effective and proper utilization. To actualize this, government should set up a body or an agency for this purpose so as to curb and stop the bad spirit/attitude of some government officials siphoning or diverting primary school funds to some other things or to their personal pockets.
8. Teachers' recruitment, appointment and deployment procedure, should be sanitized. Since it cannot be separated from issues of teachers' salary, it has to be made at local government and state levels, based on the realities of local conditions and demands.
9. Studies have identified some essential skills required of primary school teachers which their training must try to incorporate. They include
  - i. Skill of working collaboratively with other teachers
  - ii. Ability to organize and plan teaching that takes into account children's learning needs such as providing children with opportunities to develop creativity and problem-solving skills and acquiring language and literacy skills that will enhance their learning.
  - iii. Interactive classroom instruction for better teaching
  - iv. School-based and teacher-led activities for improved instruction and learning. Supporting the above suggestions on general terms, Mahmoud (2013), highlighted what is to be done to face the challenges of education in Nigeria as follows:
    - Adequate Teacher Education Training with adequate provision of resources with re-introducing of Teacher Colleges.
    - Quality assurance in terms of class size, number of teachers, and instructional materials.
    - Proper governance of schools and implementation of school management committees (SMCs)
    - Adequate budgetary provision (funding of the educational sector).
    - Employment of professionals (qualified teaching staff).
    - Provision of child-friendly and teacher-friendly school environment
    - Review of school curricula for promoting relevant learning and extra curricula activities.
    - Admission of students to schools based on merit and not on political grounds
    - Special salaries for teachers should be provided.

## Reference

Achugbu, P.C. (2011). "Making Education Relevant Through Social Science Education and Self-Relevance in the 21st Century Nigeria". In P. Egbule, J.E. Tabotndip and D.A. Aboho (eds) Refocusing education in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (p506) West and Solomon Publishing Coy.Ltd, Onitsha.

- Agocha (1998). Primary education in Nigeria: philosophy and practice: Ibadan: Victory Press
- Dewey, J. (1960). Democracy and education. Jerusalem
- Efedi, O. E (2010). "The Challenges of Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Schools." In E. C. Ilopuitaife, B.U. Maduwesi and R.O. Igbo (eds). Issues and challenges in Nigerian education in the 21st century. West and Solomon Publishing Coy Ltd. Onitsha. (P 451).
- Efedi, O.E. (2009). "Higher Education Teaching in Nigeria: Problems and the Way Forward." *Journal of Teacher Perspective (ASSONT)* 3 (1) 168-177.
- Egbon, P.C. (1995). "The Nigeria Economy and Self-Reliance: A Critical Analysis" in Iyeha, F. F: Chizea, B.U. and Akpotor S.A. (eds) *Self-reliance, political and administration in Nigeria. Ekpoma, Department of Political Science. Ambrose Ali University*
- Eregha, E.E. (2011). "Reappraising Citizenship Education for Self-Reliance in Nigerian." *In Journal of qualitative education by ASSEQEN-7 (b)* May 6-V.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education. Revised Edition Yaba Lagos Nigeria: NERDC press (P.8)
- Ferriere, A. (1951). The ABC of the new education. Hakhinukh (305-330)
- Ibrahim, A. A. (2009). "Towards Functional and Qualitative Primary Education in 21st century Nigeria. *Journal of Teacher perspective (HSSONT)* 3 (1)98-102.
- Maduwesi, J.(2005). Bench work' and global trends in education. Benin City: Desylva influences enterprises.
- Mahmoud, S. S. M (2013). "Education: Problem and Challenges in Nigeria, What to be Done?" Published Sunday 13th March 2013 05:00 Sarki Malam-Madori, Sarkimahmound@yahoo.com.
- Mbanefoh, G (1988), "Towards Self-Reliance in Consumption in Nigeria:" A paper presented at the workshop on Mass Mobilization for Economic Recovery and self -Reliance in Nigeria. Organization by the NES and the Directorate for Social Mobilization Abuja.
- Moemeke, C. D. (2001). "Quality Science Teaching: Perspectives for Development of Metacognitive Skills by Learners." In Egbule T.E.: Tobtnip and D.A. Aboho (eds) *Refocusing education in Nigeria in the 21st century*. West and Solomon Publishing Coy, Ltd (p 212):
- Nwangwu, N.A. (1990). "Financing education in Nigeria: Issues and innovations" in S.O. Onaifo and U.B. Cabenedio (eds), *Towards Education in Nigeria for 21st century*. Benin Institute of Education, p 90-101.
- Ogbonnaya, N.O. (2013). "Functional Education for Values, Knowledge, Skills and National Development." In *knowledge review. A multidisciplinary journal (NAFAK)*.28(2)10-13.
- Okafor, E.C. (2006). *Philosophy of education and 3rd World Perspective (5th Edition)* Part-Harcourt: Odomezie.

- Olatunde A. (2013). "Quality Primary Education: Issues, options for Cost Effective Strategies and the Way Forward". A paper presented at the Ekiti State Education summit. May 4th-5th 2013.
- Sule, M.N. (2001), Paper presented at the National Conference of the academic trust fund of F.C.E Pankshin 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011, at the College Auditorium.
- Ughamadu, M.C. (2013). "Towards Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) In Nigeria." African Journal of Studies in Education. Faculty of Education UNIBEN 9(1) 133-141.