

THE RELEVANCE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN BRIDGING THE GAP IN EDUCATION FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Primary Education policy and its implementations is paramount in bridging the gap in education in Nigeria. This paper examined the relevance of stakeholders in bridging the gap from policy to practice in primary education. The stakeholders are the three-tiers of Governments- Federal, State and Local Government and the Community. The Federal, State and Local Government ministries of education are relevant in the area of standards. While through their agencies of National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) ministries of education, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) and Local Education Authorities (LEA) implement the policy on primary education. Constraints to achieving primary education goals were highlighted. Finally, the paper advocated for efforts of the three-tiers of Governments to ensure the effective implementation of primary education policy and goals in order to bridge the gap between policy and practice in education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Primary Education, Goals, Relevance, Stakeholders

Education has become a very big enterprise all over the world. The importance of education to every citizen has also become a central issue for discussion in very many global fora. The need to increase access and justification for all human and material investment in education has become necessary. A policy declaration of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education 1981 is that "the Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument per excellence for effective national development (N.P.E 1981, 5) By that policy declaration it is evident that Nigeria believes in the efficacy of education as the vehicle for individual and national development.

Education in Nigeria is overseen by the Ministry of Education. The Government takes responsibility for implementing policy for state-controlled public education and state schools at a regional level. The education system is divided into kindergarten, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education.

History of Primary Education in Nigeria Primary Education refers to the first or elementary stage of the total process of developing human ability and behaviour. It also means the first state of the social process in which an individual achieves social competence and growth. According to Chukwura 2005, Primary Education is the stage of the total process of developing the human ability and behaviour carried on in a selected control setting which is instructionalised in modern society. Primary Education is seen as basic or fundamental or foundational education.

National Policy of Education (NPE) (2004) states that Primary Education is the education given in an institution to children aged 6 to 11 plus. It is the key to the successful or failure of the whole education system. Primary Education is seen as the base, and the entrance to the Education World. The tenure or duration is six years.

The Goals of Primary Education

The goals of Primary Education as stipulated by (NPE 2004) are:

- (a) inculcate 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) mould 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;
- (g) provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

These goals form the basis of the primary education in all the states of the federation.

Primary Education – Historical Overview

The missionaries were the pioneers of primary education in Nigeria. The first primary school in Nigeria was established by Wesleyan Methodist Society in 1842 and in 1845. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established their own primary school. The other missionary bodies like Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the American Baptist and Roman Catholic Mission followed suit. So by 1870, these big four missionary bodies in Nigeria had established missionary schools in Nigeria. The arrival of

missionary in Nigeria thus triggered off the proliferation of primary schools. According to Whawo (2004), these early mission schools were controlled and managed by the individual missionary body for forty years without a central control. There was no written policy or law governing the primary education of the missionaries. It was in 1882 that the Colonial Government propagate the first Education Ordinance.

The National Policy of Education was the first Nigerian document to guide education in the country published in 1977. Though in 1969, National Curriculum Conference attempted to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system. The National Policy of Education published in 1977 had since undergone changes till the revision in 2004. The missionary primary schools has low quality but it was on this foundation that today National Primary Education was built upon.

What this paper sets out to do is to highlight the relevance of the stakeholder in primary education so as to achieve the goals of primary education in Nigeria, thereby bridging the gap between policy to practice in primary education. Our attention will be directed at the following:

- (1) Who are the stakeholders in Primary Education?
- (2) What are the roles of the stakeholders in Primary Education
- (3) What are the role conflict associated with Primary Education?

Who are the Stakeholders in Primary Education

The stakeholders in primary education are the three tiers of Government: the Federal, State and Local Governments. They carried out their functions using agencies under them at the various level of government. The structured could be categorized into two

- (i) The policy and standard
- (ii) The implementation

<u>Policy and standard</u>	<u>Implementation</u>
Federal Ministry of Education	→ National Primary Education Commission (NPEC)
State Ministry of Education	→ State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)
Local Government Ministry of Education	→ Local Government Education of Authority (LGEA) ↓ District Education Committee

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What are the Roles of Stakeholders in Primary Education

I. The Government

The Federal, State and Local Governments are stakeholders in primary education in Nigeria today. There are stakeholders in the formulation and establishment of primary schools in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria under Decree 16 of 1985 gave the management of primary schools to the three tiers of government. Again the fourth schedule, part section 7, paragraph 1 and 2 of the 1991 constitution discussed the function of Local Government Council, paragraph 2, states that the functions of the Local Government shall (a) "the provision and maintenance of primary and vocational. But Decree 96 of 25th August 1993 now replaces the control of primary education under the local government councils. Since the declaration of the Universal Primary Education (UBE) 1999, for effective management and control of Primary Education, the Federal Government now directly control primary education through the National Education Commission and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) all over the federation. Now the agencies in the administration of primary education through which the Federal Government carry out her activities include

- i. Ministry of Education
- ii. National Primary Education Commission (NUPEC)
- iii. State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)
- iv. Local Education of Authority
- v. The School Administration
- vi. District Education Committee

The administration of primary education is guided by stipulated rules and regulations. The Government ensures that these rules and regulations are adhered to and that uniform standard are maintained throughout the federation both in public and private primary schools.

The Federal Government mapped out strategies to make primary education relevant and implement the policy objectives. Firstly, the Government introduced a free and universal primary education UPE scheme in September 1976 but this later collapsed. Secondly, the Federal Government introduced the Universal Basic Education which was launched on September, 30, 1999. The Universal Basic Education was for nine years compulsory education which the first six years was the primary education. Ebenebe (2007) opined that Universal Basic Education is meant to fully equip individuals with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them live meaningfully and fulfilled lives deriving maximum social economic and cultural benefit from the society. At the primary education level there is compulsory six years of schooling with the Universal Basic Education. The Federal, State and Local Government should ensure that every child have access to primary education.

2. Ministries of Education

Primary education in Nigeria is organized and controlled under Ministries of Education from Federal, State and Local Government. The Ministries of Education is concerned with policy and standard of primary education.

The Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education perform numerous roles. According to Peretomode (2001) the roles of the Federal Ministries of Education include

- a. Formulating a National Policy on Education
- b. Collecting and collating data, planning and financing
- c. Maintaining uniform standards of education throughout the country
- d. Controlling the quality of education in the country
- e. Harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the States of the federation through the instrumentality of the National Council on Education (NCE) which is the highest policy making body as regards to matters in education in the country. It is supported by the Joint Consultative Committee which acts as co-operation in educational matters on an international scale.
- f. Developing curricula and syllabuses at the National level in conjunction with other bodies
- g. Establishment of central registry for teachers.

At the state level, the State Ministry of Education in Nigeria work directly under the Federal Ministry. The roles or functions of State Ministry Education as listed by Peretomode (2001) include:

- a. Administration of the entire education system in the State
- b. Implementing National Education Policy at the State level
- c. Making regulations for the admission of students into state schools and withdrawal of students from schools
- d. Examination and certificate of primary pupils
- e. Award of bursaries and scholarship to deserving pupils of the State
- f. Funding of educational institutions – Primary education
- g. Co-ordination and harmonization of educational activities through the state
- h. Planning and developing education in the State
- i. Inspection and supervision of both administrative and academic components of schools
- j. Establishment of Teachers' Registration Council (TRC).

At the Local Government level, the Ministry of Education, roles performed include the following as stipulated by Chukwuma (2009) run Day to Day management of primary school.

- a. Provide inspectorate services to the primary schools on behalf of the State Ministry of Education

- b. Organization of examinations
- c. Repair damaged school buildings on behalf of the State Ministry of Education
- d. Placement of pupils into secondary schools
- e. Help in the distribution of certain school materials such as seats, registers, chalk, dusters, and information to primary schools within their locality.

Stakeholders on Area of Implementation

A. **National Primary Education Commission (NPEC)** was first established on 24th April, 1989 with the headquarters in Kaduna but was re-established by Decree 96 of 1993 as the highest body over primary education matters in the country. The functions of the commission as contained in Decree 96 of 25th August 1993 include:

- 1. Prescribe the minimum standards of primary education throughout Nigeria
- 2. Inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the funding of primary education in Nigeria
- 3. Receive the National Primary Education Fund as established by this law from the Federal Government and allocate the fund to the Primary Education Board of each state and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and to any agency responsible for Federal Government sponsored special primary education project in accordance with the formula prescribed in this law, or as may be prescribed from time to time.
- 4. Collate, after consultation with all the State Governments, periodic master plan for a balanced and coordinated development of primary education in Nigeria as such plans shall include: proposals to the Federal Government for equal and adequate primary education opportunity in Nigeria.
- 5. Collate, analyze and publish information relating to primary education in Nigeria
- 6. Carrying out a regular personal audit in each state of the federation
- 7. Carrying out such other activities that are relevant and conducive to the discharge of its functions under this law and such other functions as the minister may from time to time determine.

B. State Universal Basic Education Board

The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) came into being with the introduction of the Universal Basic Education. SUBEB major duty is the welfare of primary education in the state. Eluowa (2002) listed the functions of SUBEB to include

- 1. Management of primary schools in the state
- 2. Recruitment, appointment, promotion and discipline of teaching and non-teaching staff on grade level and above
- 3. Posting and development of staff including inter state transfer
- 4. Disbursement of funds provided to it from federal and state sources
- 5. Setting up an effective functional supervisory unit
- 6. Retirement and re-absorption of teachers
- 7. Undertaking new capital projects

8. Responsibility for the approval, training and retraining of teaching and non-teaching staff based on the scheme of service drawn up by the state government.
9. Ensuring that annual reports are rendered by heads of schools on teaching staff whenever necessary.
10. Preparing testimonials and certificates of services for teaching and non-teaching staff when necessary
11. Dealing with leave matters including annual vacation
12. Ensuring annual auditing of accounts
13. Performing such other functions as may be assigned to the board by the Commissioner for Education or the Commission (NPEC)

C. Local Government Education Authority (LGEA)

The Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) was established as one of the organs of the NPEC for the purpose of performing specific functions in respect of primary school in the Local Government Areas in the country. The functions of LGEA as stipulated in Decree 96 of 1993 include:

1. The day to day administration of primary schools in their respective areas of jurisdiction
2. Payments of salaries, allowances and benefits to both academic and non-academic staff of the authority.
3. Distribution of equipment, acquisition and materials to all primary schools
4. The appointment, deployment, promotion and transfer of teaching and non-teaching staff on grade levels 01 – 06
5. Handling of disciplinary problems of staff of primary schools within its area of authority
6. Rendering annual report to SUBEB
7. Encouragement of full enrolment and attendance to all primary schools
8. Understanding general maintenance of primary school buildings and infrastructure
9. Supervisory all district Education Committee and performing other functions as may be delegated by SUBEB.

D. District Education Committee

The District Education Committee is the grassroot arm of the implementation aspect of primary education where the community play its relevant roles in the primary education. According to Chukwuma (2009) its functions are

1. Campaign for enrolment into primary schools at community levels
2. Promotes community school relationship
3. Encourage community interest for full participation in primary education.
4. Encourage full attendance of schools by pupils.

Role Conflicts Associated with Achieving Primary Education Goals

No matter how laudable the Policy on Education of any country, there are always constraints on achieving the objectives. Problems associated with achieving the primary education goals in Nigeria include role conflict between the Ministry of Education and Local Government Education Secretary and role conflict between the Local Government Education Authority Secretary and the part time chairman and the instability and inconsistency in the management of primary education.

i. Role conflict between Ministry of Education and LGEA Secretary

The role conflict between the Ministry of Education and the LGEA Secretary on area of management and supervision had been a silent war. From the roles and responsibilities, the Ministry of Education is responsible for pupils enrolment for different examinations and for placement of primary school pupils who had passed out of primary school into secondary schools for maintenance of standard. While the LGEA is responsible for the payment of teacher salaries, allowances, promotions, transfer, distribution of material and equipment to all primary schools. The question is why do ministry of education supervise primary schools when LGEA is the sole manager of the primary schools. This role conflict has not been clarified by the policy makers to allow for smooth relationship between Ministry of Education and LGEA.

ii. Role Conflict between the LGEA Secretary and the Part-time Chairman

Another area where role conflict has affected the effectiveness of the implementation of primary school goals is between the part-time chairman and the LGEA Secretary. The part-time chairman is by political appointment who is not regular staff always want to challenge the authority of the secretary as opined by Chukwuma (2011), the functions and interpretation of their roles in the Local Government Education Authority office have not been properly defined. This internal conflict affect primary education goals.

iii. The instability and inconsistency in the management of primary education

This is seen in corruption, incompetence, and political interference in the management of primary education which are constraints in realizing the aims and objectives from policy to practice.

Conclusion

Primary education in Nigeria remains the bedrock of education in Nigeria. Policy statements on primary education could be laudable on paper but the proper implementation is necessary to bridge the gap in primary education between the policy and practice. It is hoped that the relevant agencies will serve and commit the necessary strategies and funds to constantly review, update and improve primary education to make relevant at all times. Onyeukwu (2005) opined that the statements of the aims and

objectives at primary education which represent the articulation of the vision and mission of primary education in National Policy on Education (NPE) are well conceived and adequately stated. But the strategies for implementing them, though also well conceived and succinctly articulated were not executed.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be effective monitoring of the implementation of primary education policy and goals
2. School-community relationship should be strengthened and the society should show greater interest in supporting primary education
3. All efforts of the three tiers of Government should be geared towards adequate and quality primary education in ensuring adequate provision of fund and all other necessities
4. Supervision and monitoring of primary schools should be regular to improve and maintain high standard
5. The functions and responsibilities of the Local Government Education Secretary and the Chief Inspector of Education from the Ministry of Education should be properly defined to avoid role conflict
6. The function of the part-time chairman and the LGEA Secretary should be defined and properly spelt out to avoid conflict and rancour.
7. The policy makers and the implementers of primary education policy should be prepared to play effective and efficient roles in carrying out their various responsibilities with all available resources to achieve primary education goals in Nigeria
8. Primary education is "the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system" therefore serious attention must be given to this bed rock of all other level of education
9. Primary education should be politicized or used as toy in the hands of politicians. Qualified professionals in education should be appointed to manage primary education both at the federal, state and local government levels
10. Policies on primary education and their implementation should be evaluated regularly through research
11. The nation should adhere to the UNESCO suggestion of 26% of the nation budget to education funding.

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