

## **RE-FOCUSING PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:** Primary school level of education remains a central pillar in the foundation of other levels of education which no nation can afford to toy with. A crack in it means a major crack in the entire system, hence the introduction of this new laudable curriculum which introduces entrepreneurial skills at this formative stage. This paper examined the imperatives for its effective implementation that would inculcate enough knowledge, skills, values and positive attitude capable of ensuring sustainable national security.

**Keywords:** Primary school, entrepreneurship skills, sustainable national interest.

### **How To Cite**

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### **Introduction**

Education generally can be said to be as old as man himself. It is a process that starts from birth to death. It is the process by which young people acquire the cultural heritage, knowledge, ideals and the civilization of the past so as to be able to take part in the civilization of the present and also help to build the civilization of the future (Osuji, & Suleh, 2017). According to Hornby (2015) education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values beliefs and habits for the development of the society. Education provides the fulcrum around which all national developmental policies evolve and revolve. It consists of invaluable inputs and products of knowledge, skills and competencies (Junaidu 2020). From the above definitions we can reasonably say that education is a

systematic process whereby a given society or nation like Nigeria tries to bring-up their younger generation to acquire sustainable knowledge skills, attitudes and other virtues that would make them functional members of the society. Therefore, functional education wages serious war against diseases, ignorance superstitious belief and poverty that form major obstacles to sustainable national security.

All forms and levels of education aim at bringing about behavioural change in learners which will enable them fit properly and become acceptable members of the society. Formal education forms a window through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes with which to develop their innate potentials. This could manifest in such areas as academic, economic, social and political activities or better

governance. However, where the individuals are not educated the reverse becomes the case. Well-informed societies ensure sustainable national security.

Formal education in Nigeria first started with the coming of various missionary bodies. It was in 1843, that Rev. Smauel Ajayi Crowther, Rev. C.A. Gollmer and Mr. Henry Townsend of the church missionary society (CMS) arrived at Badagry and moved to Abeokuta where they founded two primary schools, one for boys, and the other for girls in 1846 (Amadi, 2014). These missionary bodies used education as means of converting Nigerians into their different religious denominations.

The school's curriculum and its content at this period in time was too narrow with greater emphasis on religion (Christian religion), reading, writing and Arithmetic all in the English language. Other subject subsidiaries included Nature study (Agriculture) and local craft. The primary aim of these mission schools was basically for the training of indigenous personnel for the evangelical work as catechists and for lower level manpower to serve as interpreters in churches, native courts, and for the British Businessmen.

The primary school system grew gradually from mission/voluntary Agencies to the regions, when in 1955 the Western Regional government launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Besmart, 2005). This was followed by Eastern Regional government in 1957. Then between 1960 and 1970 primary education was duelly managed by the state and voluntary agencies. The state took full control from 1970 till 1976 when the Federal Government of Nigeria launched her Universal free Primary Education (UPE) throughout the federation. The Decree number 3 of the then Federal Military Government of Nigeria which was promulgated in 1991 empowered the establishment in every Local Government Area the Local Education Authority (LGEA). The main function is the management of primary schools in the given local government area (Amadi, 2014). This no doubt marks the beginning of an era in the history of primary school management in Nigeria.

Primary education is by all standard the master key for the individual and the nation's socio-economic development and growth. This implies that all efforts and energies should be geared towards improving literacy level in Nigeria, since it forms a pre-condition for social and economic development of any nation Nigeria inclusive. It is only a literate citizenry that can appreciate their fundamental human rights and defend them where and when necessary. They can also exercise their civic

duties more appropriately. Education one obtains at various levels and in all circumstances for sure is for proper development of the individual and as catalyst for a sustainable national security.

Primary education forms the solid base upon which other levels of education rest. According to Amadi (2014: 113) "education rears the child for the nation, and secures in children the essential condition for its own existence" when the foundation of education (primary education) is weak, it is bound to produce citizens that would have very weak economic, social and political structures. It is through the acquisition of functional primary school knowledge, skills values and attitudes as perceived in the new curriculum, that individuals are empowered against mass-poverty basic hygiene and sanitation. In this the educated and empowered pupils on their graduation become vital vanguard for sustainable national security. This is because they can at this level be gainfully engaged or employed in any entrepreneurial skill centre or as potential secondary school candidates. Therefore, it is vital to ensure effective implementation of primary school curriculum, in order to develop the individual skills and character that would enhance sustainable national security.

However, Primary Education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus and with the duration of six years. The goals of primary education which form the basis in all the states of the federation include among others. Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively, lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking, give a citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society, mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child, give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the function effectively in the society within these limits of the child's capacity and provide the child with tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trade and crafts of the locality (FRN 2014: 20). The federal government of Nigeria in her pursuance of the above noble goals at this level made primary education tuition free, universal, and compulsory for all concerned

Then, for an effective implementation, the primary school education curriculum shall include: Languages; language of the environment of the child, English language, French language (for easy communication with our neighbours (Franco-phone neighbouring countries of the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) region, Arabic, Mathematics; Science; Physical and health education; Religious knowledge; Agriculture/home economics; Social studies and citizenship education; and Cultural and creative arts (Drawing, hand craft, music, and cultural activities)

Education as a discipline is an organized body of knowledge that deals with such critical questions of as what should be taught. Why should it be taught? How should it be taught? (Osuji & Suleh, 2017). Then from the above, the primary school curriculum is all about the Nigerian child to have a sustainable livelihood skill on graduation from the primary school system. They are required to have acquired skills which can be supportive to them even in society. In secondary school, they will continue to improve on such skill or trade while in tertiary institution and beyond their graduation, thereby producing a functional person.

Curriculum as a concept has been viewed with several meanings by many scholars in the field. The latin origin is from the word 'currus' which means 'race course' through which a competitor runs in order to reach a given point to win a prize or certificate. Over the years, curriculum came to mean a course of study that is followed in a school (Obasi, 2009). The child is expected to grow-up with those experiences acquired from such place or institution. Again, curriculum "is a planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal-social competence (Akubilio 2014). Infact many scholars see the curriculum as the cumulative tradition of organized knowledge, means of thought, race experience, guided experience, a planned learning environment, an instructional plan among others. This has resulted in many varied definitions that have been ascribed to the term curriculum. It is what is intended or planned to be learned in school (Chukwuemeka 2021).

Therefore, one can say that curriculum is all the planned and unplanned learning experiences which the child gets from the school which enables to acquire sustainable knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes that would ensure sustainable national security. It is at this stage in life (6 to 12 years) that the child can imbibe the spirit of love for God, honesty, respect for elders, spirit of hardwork and patriotism which will ensure national security. They will not grow to be destructive. Curriculum is about what is intended to offer to the

learner, while instruction is the actual process or means of offering the intents to the learner.

### **Instruction**

This term simply means the way, order, and means of realizing those set down intentions which constitute the instructional or implementation process. This shows that curriculum so to say does not necessarily result into students' learning; rather the students' learning is brought about through the process of instruction in the classroom with the guidance of the teacher. The intended learning outcome is usually a statement of what the students are to learn and this could be in either in one or the three domains of learning. The "what to learn may be about facts ideas, principles, capabilities, skills, values or feelings. The use of the word "intended" emphasizes the notion of control and direction in the educational process (Offorma 2016). Therefore, instruction is composed of both teaching and learning in a formal educational setting in which the teacher may be present physically such as in face to face arrangement or may be absent, such as in case of online learning or in televised education programme or computer assisted forms.

Instruction refers to methods of teaching and learning activities used to assist students master the contents and objectives as specified by the given curriculum. According to Isioma (2015), instruction encompasses the activities of both teachers and students. It can be carried out by a variety of pedagogical techniques, sequences of activities and ordering of topics. An innovative instructional delivery as the name suggests is a paradigm shift from the old ways to the new ways of teaching and learning processes. The instructiveness demands that the activities should be learner-oriented instead of teacher oriented (Offorma, 2019). The innovation promotes the 4cs which means communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking-thereby changing the idea of teaching from "telling" to facilitation of learning.

In the primary school curriculum, it is equally recommended that the mode of teaching and learning shall be by practical, exploratory and experimental while the medium of instruction shall be the language of the environment (FRN, 2014). This aimed at equipping the child with some entrepreneurship skills for sustainable national security.

### **Entrepreneurship Primary Education**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) as already stated above noted that the Nigerian child should be given opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society. Then given the quantum of graduates from

tertiary institutions being churn-out annually, one can now appreciate the need for this decision in its inclusion in primary education curriculum. It is a form of education programme that equips learners with the knowledge, skills and motivation to undertake entrepreneurial ventures in a variety of settings or outfits (Okoye, 2020). Again it is a form of education designed to communicate and inculcate skills, competencies and values needed to recognize business opportunities, organize and start up new business ventures (Ogedengbe, Okhakhu & Adekunle, 2015). It is hoped that through this entrepreneurship education that the primary school pupils could be guided early enough on issues pertaining to entrepreneurship intents, and prepare their mindset on how to reduce risks associated with the given venture during the initial stages of a successful business (Okoye, 2020). The pupils are to be sensitized to have positive attitude that wealth actually comes from nature like Agriculture (plants and animals). The pupils can equally attain sustainable development through acquired skills from Information Communication and Technology (ICT) as articulated in their curriculum. However the era of mere collection of hand work, inform of brooms and baskets are to change to proper inculcation of entrepreneurial skills in pupils for attainment of sustainable development.

#### **Sustainable Development**

This entails the ability to continue at an acceptable level over a period of time while development may be seen as a process by which people or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced people, society or things. It is a process of introducing and maintaining growth or change in a balanced fashion, in doing this the exploitation of resources and the technological advancements promote both present and future potential to meet human needs. For example, sustaining effective implementation of the primary school curriculum will not only grow the primary school system but the whole education system in the country. According to Agboeze (2019), sustainable development attempts to improve the living conditions of the present generation and at the same time, it gives the future generations opportunity to meet their own needs and enjoy good living conditions. Sustainable education as a concept has to do with active academic participation of pupils to create economic, social and environmental programs, improving life standards, generating empowerment and respecting interdependence (Nwoji & Njoku, 2020). However it may be pertinent to state at this point that there are presently in our country high rate of unemployment or

underemployment, corruption, political instability, inequality and other socio-economic challenges. These faceted vices bear a lot of negative impacts on our socio-economic system. It is on this premise that it has become imperative to have a refocus on primary school curriculum and instruction for a sustainable national security in Nigeria.

#### **National Security**

Originally, the concept of national security is conceived as protection against military attack, but presently it is widely understood to include also non-military dimension including the security from terrorism, minimization of crime, economic, security. It is also the security and defence of a nation state including its citizens, economy and institutions which is regarded as duty of government. They have caused several thousands of people to be refugees in their own land. Then millions of primary school aged pupils are made to waste away as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

National security is the ability to preserve the nations physical and integrity and territory to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms to preserve its nature, institution and governance from disruption from outside and to control its borders. It is best described as, a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing. It can also be described as the capability and the ability of a country to overcome or even check mate the multi-dimensional ethnic threats to the wellbeing of the greater majority of her population. Security is the opposite of insecurity which is associated with violence, war, terror, jungle justice, lawlessness, fear. This situation if occur will not lead to the growth of education and other socio-economic development.

In Nigeria presently, the growth of education is greatly threatened by the activities of two terrorist groups namely Boko-Haram and Fulani Herdsmen. The Boko-Haram is said to be against western education. The group had launched a full-scale war with the Federal government of Nigeria. They occupy many local government areas in the North East geo-political zone of Nigeria thereby making teaching and learning very difficult in schools. The group destroy schools, kill and maim people they abducted over two hundred and eighty (280) secondary school girls at Dapchi secondary school in Yobe State. The Fulani Herdsmen are also in majority of states of the country killing and maiming people, raping women and burning down schools and chasing out



people from their homes. In the South East part of the country, the activities of “unknown gunmen” do disrupt school programmes, there schools were often forced to close down on certain days of the week. These cannot make for smooth curriculum implementation in primary schools. The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report on Global Peace Index (GPI) which was published by the Institute for Economic and Peace a non partisan and nonprofit organization in Sydney, Australia placed Nigeria among the least peaceful countries of the world (Ibrahim, 2020).

### **Challenges of Implementing the New Primary School Curriculum**

The new primary school curriculum though well intended and laudable may not address the need issues if it is not effectively implemented. Nigeria is good in introducing new policies in education sector, but the major problem lies in effective monitoring and implementation to ensure effective realization of such goal(s). In line with this Junaid (2020) noted that Nigeria makes good policies but at the same time unable to confront the very realities on ground to implement such policies. The perceived challenges include:

1. The teachers who are the actual curriculum implementers at the classroom level are not adequately involved at the planning stage of new education policies.
2. Adequate funds are not made available to schools for procurement of modern teaching and learning facilities.
3. There is curriculum over load in primary school level. The teacher is meant to teach all subjects irrespective of their level of training during teacher education programme.
4. Most teachers in primary schools still apply the teacher-centered approach in classroom.
5. There is dearth of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, workshops and operational vehicles/buses for field trips.
6. Supply of skilled artisans is grossly inadequate in most primary schools.
7. The activities of Fulani herdsmen unknown gunmen have posed great threat to curriculum implementation in schools many schools are said to have been closed down for fear of possible death, maiming or kidnapping of the school children.

### **Conclusion**

In Nigeria and indeed world over the primary school structure forms of major pillar that carries the other, structures that is the secondary and tertiary education. Any major crack in primary level if not properly tackled may have serious effects at the other two levels. The high importance government attach on this level, may explain the huge resources being invested into the system. This has made it imperative to examine the implementation of the new primary school curriculum aimed for sustainable national security.

### **Recommendations/Way Forward**

1. Governments at all levels should ensure the involvement of teachers who are the actual implementers during the planning stage of innovations in education.
2. Human and material resources including adequate funds must be available to enable the procurement of adequate teaching and learning facilities.
3. Government agencies as a matter of urgency should employ qualified teachers to teach some subjects that require specialist hands due to certain technicalities inherent in them.
4. Governments and private school proprietors should regularly send teachers to seminars and workshops to update teachers with new trends in teaching learning methods.
5. Philanthropists and wealthy individuals should assist governments and individuals in equipping schools with modern facilities for teaching and learning especially the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in primary schools. Qualified (skilled) artisans should be engaged/employed to teach some practical aspect of some subjects such as basic technology/science should as a matter of necessity ban the open grazing and provide grazing field as done in more developed countries of the world. This would check the frequent clashes of farmers herdsmen in communities.

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