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***Publication of the Primary and Tertiary Teacher
Education Association of Nigeria (PATTEAN)***

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EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION: A VIABLE TOOL FOR CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

Early childhood care education is an important component of universal basic education. It constitutes a crucial stage as well as a critical period in the life span of a child. It connotes an early intervention in child's physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being. This paper aims at providing conceptual framework of early childhood care education, its history and overall philosophy in Nigeria. The paper examined early childhood care education as a viable tool of influencing some specific areas of child growth and development, owing to its future prospects and challenges. It concludes by establishing that effective funding, monitoring and evaluation, partnership and collaboration from stakeholders, child friendly environment, proper health and nutrition among others, will go a long way in actualizing quality early childhood programme in Nigeria.

Introduction

Early childhood care education is a lifelong education that revolves round the growth, survival of the child in line with their developmental milestones. It is an important element considered most significant and appropriate at training children for mutually helpful living. Early childhood care education begins from the moment the child is conceived, up till delivery and when the child starts to attend play groups, kindergartens. This period is so demanding in the sense that, it is a period when children need high quality care and learning experiences needed for successful – smooth transition from home to school and to wider community. Early childhood education lays

a solid foundation which predetermined to a large extent success or failure in child's later years.

Early childhood education remained like a "Black box, engine house" with which if well managed at the early years, would produce a valued educational achievement on the part of the receiver and vice versa. It is similar to factory and laboratory that engages in the production of competitive goods and services, and thus test the strengths and weaknesses of educational plans. It could be viewed like a foundation that upholds the entire structure, a wheel that fixed up tyres, shock absorber of a car, and black box of an aero plane. Therefore, putting it in- place at the right time remained the only alternative towards ensuring and building a well- groomed individual in the society (Abdulwahab, 2010).

Education for early years is not so much about the ability to read and write or knowledge acquisition Parse but about cultivation of learning.

That is, education is more about what you do and how you do it. It's like a process of farming with which if you sow a thousand seeds without the right depth, water, etc, all will come to naught (Ahme,2007).

Brief History of Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria

Pre-primary education is as old as man. It dates back to colonial rule. Though such institutions were few comprising of "Jeleosinmi" meaning 'lets the home rest' in the South Western regions and "Otakara" meaning 'children whose parents kept at the centre and been induced by beans cake' in the Eastern parts of the country. Many kept their wards while they are away for some reasons such as on the farms, in the markets, offices, domestic chores, office work, industry / company work etc. Some parents dropped their children or wards at a section of a church called Sunday school. Children sang and danced, and learnt a word or two of the word of God from the teacher until the service was over.

As time went by, more centers were established for children of colonial master, expatriates and top ranking chiefs, colonial- social workers etc. With increasing rates of out of school growing children after independence led to the initiation of Universal Primary Education in 1976 by General Yakubu Gowon. This increases and expanded more early childhood

centers in the country. The policy programme crumbled owing to low psyche to policy implementation, lack of political will, mediocrity of policy framework, inconsistency and incessant policy making, lack of enabling environment for full policy take-off, regional problem, and inappropriate supervisory / technical skills.

Therefore, with wide range of global – international organizations/ partnership such as UNICEF, UNESCO, NEPAD, UNDP, UNDHR, among others broadened Nigerians perception on child's education and their needs. In addition to Federal Government commitment to address early childhood education led to the introduction of UBE which was initially discussed in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) among E-9 nations of which Nigeria is Signatory, Held at Delhi. Against this background, the laudable UBE programme was introduced and announced in Sokoto in September 30, 1999 by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo . Early childhood care education became a component of the programme with well- defined policy objectives, duely signed into law (UBE Acts) in 2004 respectively (Abdulwahab, 2012).

Philosophy of Early Childhood Care Development and Education in Nigeria.

The FRN (2004) describes early childhood education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. According to Abdulwahab (2012), early childhood care education is an important component of universal basic education which refers to an educational programme designed for children aged 0- 5years.

FME(2007) stated that research evidence abound from many fields of study that the care and support received by a child in terms of good health, nutrition and psycho- social care and protection are crucial in the formation and development of intelligence, personality and social behavior. Since integrated early childhood care education(IECD)aims to integrate interventions from the various sectors; the objectives of the policy derive from the national policies on education, food and nutrition, health and the child right acts, as follows:

- a. Provide care and support that will ensure the rights of the child to:
 - (i) Good nutrition and health.
 - (ii) Health and safe environment.
 - (iii) Psycho- social stimulation.
 - (iv) Protection and participation.
- b. Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys.
- c. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while parents/ guardians are at work (on the farms, in the markets, office, industry, etc).
- d. Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- e. Prepare the child to adapt successfully when his or her current context changes.
- f. Develop a healthy, well nourished adequately stimulated child able to achieve its fullest potentials.
- g. Contribute to reduction of high infant and U-5 mortality.

- h. Raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and promote protective behavior among children including OVCs.
- i. Inculcate acceptable social and culturally appropriate norms, value and beliefs.
- j. Raise awareness on IECD policy in all community by 2015.
- k. Build capacity of all stakeholders for IECD policy implementation.
- l. Support existing legislations to reduce all forms of abuse and denial of children rights.
- m. Establish and expand mechanisms for collaboration and coordination of IECD programme.
- n. Provide guidelines and standards to ensure quality service delivery.
- o. Establish a valid and reliable monitoring and evaluation system for all aspect of the IECD policy.
- p. Establish reliable management information system on IECD to facilitate research.
- q. Build strategic partnerships with government at all levels, the private sectors, civil society organization/ NGOs, development partners and communities to mobilize resources for IECD implementation.
- r. Promote community participation, ownership and sustainability.
- s. Integration of Qur'anic system into IECCD.
- t. Teach the rudiment of numbers, letters, colors, shapes, forms, etc, through the play.

Roles of ECCE as a Responsive Partner in Child's Survival.

The role of ECCE as responsive partner in child's survival is not restricted only to school education of a child but rather extended for the promotion of life- long education in and out of school. According to Nasir (2007), over time, two factors have made it necessary for societies to put in place a systematic process for the education, care and upbringing of children before they reach the school age. He understands two factors as: Women, who traditionally were in charge of providing early care and education, have been entering paid employment in large numbers in almost every country. The second reason is the increasing number of children, particularly from poor families, who come to school without the basic experiences and

nutritional status needed for success in the formal school. This has a significant impact on the development of children generally but disadvantaged children in particular.

A review of researches (Myers and Lander 1989, UNESCO 2005 Cited in Nasir (2007), on the impact of ECCD on the development of the child reveals the following benefits on the learner:

- I. ECCD programme can have positive effects on the probability of children enrolling in school, help them make significant progress and improve their performances in the early year of primary school.
- II. ECCD programme can achieve what is stated above because they are generally associated with chances of early enrolment in school programme, enhanced health nutritional conditions and improved cognitive skills which generally improve the readiness of the child for the school.
- III. ECCD programme also enhance the acquisition of social skills like interaction, cooperation, and tolerance by the child.
- IV. Poor children and other disadvantaged children generally benefit more from the multifaceted and integrated interventions that ECCD programme contain.
- V. ECCD enhances the chances of success in children who would otherwise have found it difficult to cope with the demands of the primary school because of their low level of preparedness.

Janguza (2009) highlights five purposes of early childhood education as;

1. Early childhood education in the cognitive development of the child with play- oriented activities; children are gradually introduced to the skills of formal education like speaking, listening, reading and writing.
2. Pre- primary education provides happiness, security and care for young children especially at a time when their parent are at work, parent will also have peace of mind that their children are in safe hand while they are at work.
3. Early childhood education give children opportunity to develop scientific and technological knowledge, through the special toys and

gadget in pre- school e.g. 'speak and spell' a computerized toy for learning languages.

4. Early childhood education help for the development of good languages and social habit through free interaction and imitation, with others and observation from teachers.
5. Early childhood education help the child for skill acquisition, children at pre-primary level are given opportunity to play and manipulate their body for better health on skill development. For example, skills in handwriting, sports, vocational art and crafts.

In addition, Aparajita and Rita (2002) describe ECCD as a life time of continuous learning and experiencing from birth to old age programme. They provide children a good start in life such as:

- a) Foster in children the natural need for discovery and curiosity, and their desire to learn from the basis of lifelong learning; such interest is an asset that stays with them for the rest of their life and help to do better in later life.
- b) Respects and build parent to play the central role in child development.
- c) Supports parents with their skills as parenting, training on literacy, child development, health and nutrition, stimulate and create a good developmental environment for children.
- d) ECCD programme go much beyond school readiness, by preparing children for life and encourage them to be open for learning and for life's opportunities. It also increases in children's self confidence and other learning potentials, improved social skills, more creative ways of thinking and problem solving.
- e) Involves mostly mothers in the caring process thus builds confidence and encourages parenting skills and becomes involved in the children's learning and development.
- f) Can reduce inequality in society by giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance in life and in school.
- g) Concerned with the holistic development of children. ECCD involves many people including family, and community members, and policy makers. It forms an important component of integrated development

work. If children grow up from an early age in a stimulating environment, they will experience the feeling of confidence and self respect that comes from being able to act as an independent human being.

- h) Early stimulation and educational enrichment can promote creativity in young children. Early educational intervention providing stimulation and instruction during the pre – school years would make a difference in the children's pre- school experiences.
- i) The more experiences/ exposure we give the child at this age, richer is the dividend. At no other stage is he able to benefit as much from an enriching environment as he can than at the pre-school stage.
- j) Pre- school year is the period of socialization. It affords the child opportunity of playing with other children and thus learns to share, wait for his turn and cooperate with others.

UNICEF (2008) opined that, the early childhood care and education programme targeted at the care and education of children aged 0-5+ years is considered a period of great opportunity for growth and development. Therefore, any experience acquired at this stage of development may make or mar the child permanently; hence the specific targets of early childhood care education programme are to:

- a) Provide excellent care and support for children.
- b) Reduce mortality rates among Nigerian children.
- c) Reduce child malnutrition.
- d) Set early rhythm of learning in children.
- e) Improve enrolment, retention and learning achievements.
- f) Build the capacity of all stakeholders in early childhood care education.
- g) Reduce disease burden among Nigerian children.

Implications of Early Childhood Care on Child Growth and Development.

Early childhood care has a very long lasting influence on child growth and development. According to WHO (2009), Early childhood is the most important phase for all overall development throughout the lifespan. Brain

and biological development during the first years is highly influenced by an infant's environment. Statistics revealed that every year, more than 200 million children less than five years old fail to reach their full cognitive and social potential because of absence of early childhood care attention. Adequate stimulation and nutrition are essential for development during the first three years of child life. It is during these years that a child's brain is most sensitive to the influences of the external environment. Rapid brain development affects cognitive, social and emotional growth. Such development helps to ensure that each child reaches his/her potential and is a productive part of a rapidly changing, global society.

In a related development, Oduolowu(2011) stated that, the nutritional environments to which children are exposed, both before birth and throughout their early childhood years, influence health across the lifespan. Optimal nutrition provides children with the building blocks they need for healthy growth and development. Nutrition fuels development. From birth, infants should be fed with breast milk because it conforms to human digestion processes, serves as antibiotic and immune system against childhood diseases, aids child reasoning skills and speech development, and breast feeding is associated with better neural behavioural organization in infants, among others.

To this end, Abdulwahab (2012) opined that, the more stimulating the early environment the more a child develops and learns. Language and cognitive development are especially important during the first six months to three years of life. When children spend their early years in a less stimulating, or less emotionally and physically supportive environment, brain development is affected and leads to cognitive, social and behavioural delays. Therefore, developing an early emotional connection to care givers is also critical for an infant's well- being. Absence of attachment to a consistent caregiver either home, school, orphanage centers, may have significant negative effects on psycho- social, emotional, intellectual and cognitive functioning of such child.

Prospects of Early Childhood Care Education In Nigeria.

Early childhood care education has come stay. The task ahead is to looking for a limelight at repositioning to sustain the field for over all human development. The following are some of the salient points that make early childhood virile as identified by Abdulwahab (2012):

1. Early childhood as a basic component of universal basic education, signed into law under the UBE Act of 2004.
2. Early childhood is integrative and multi- disciplinary in nature , related to many areas of study such as home management and family living, food and nutrition , child development and care, health education (diseases control, drug use, immunization, personal hygiene, orphans and vulnerable children, water and environmental sanitation and sustainability), safety measures, etc.
3. It is an entrepreneur education for prospective care givers after graduation such as; nurse assistants, child health aides, child care agencies, etc.
4. It is backed- up with policy objectives as contained in the national policy for integrated early childhood development in Nigeria.
5. A reform brought about by NCCE towards the introduction of ECCDE in colleges of education is indeed a ray of hope for the profession.
6. It has a wider- global intervention and international partnership.
7. Collaboration and coordination from stakeholders of education is equally a standing point for the profession.

Despites the above mentioned prospects, there are still some challenges militating quality service delivery in early childhood care education, as postulated by Tahir (2006) in Nasir (2007) as;

The renew attention that this component of the UBE is receiving is not without some implementation constraints. These include lack of awareness on the part of communities, administrators and other stakeholders; in adequate facilities and personnel, lack of transparency and commitment on the part of those responsible for its implementation at the federal and state levels. But by far the greatest challenge is likely to be the teachers' factor.

Prospects of Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria.

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Other challenges facing ECCD is lack of actual enrolment figure of school – going children and early childhood centers in the country, poor enabling environment, population explosion, poor funding, social factor, lack of relevant teaching and learning materials to work with, inadequate professionals, etc.

Recommendations

For ECCD to be virile and contributory to effective child survival, the following are necessary:

1. Effective funding is a tool of sustaining and strategizing early childhood education in Nigeria.
2. Suitable child friendly environment manned with professional care givers is a basic requirement for Child's survival.
3. All existing centers should be duly registered to ensure actual enrolment drives-figure of school going children.
4. Adequate supervision and inspection would pave way for teacher's professional competency leading to quality control and assurance in early childhood education.
5. There is the need for close partnership, collaboration between school and parents, community, religions groups, government agencies, NGOs for smooth transition of the child from home to school.
6. Regular workshops, seminars and conferences on early childhood education should be organized from time to time so as to keep teachers/care giver abreast with current innovations and best practices in the field.
7. Teachers at early childhood centers without any professional training should be made to acquire proficiency training through in-service programmes.
8. All college of education should intensify effort to introduce early childhood care education so as to solve manpower problem.
9. The use of mother tongue/ language of the environment should be principally the medium of instruction at early stage in order to successfully integrate the nomad, migrant fishermen, almanjirin,

OVCs, Qur'an schooling system, girls- child education into the main stream of UBE.

10. Development partners should continue to usher in their lofty programme in the successful realization of early childhood education in Nigeria.
11. Modern physical facilities, pre-school materials for teaching and learning should be adequately provided so as to give room for increasingly enrolment figure.

Conclusion

For Nigeria child, irrespective of their condition to live to survive, grow, adapt, and conform to changing world, early childhood education is a veritable option. The requirement for child's survival physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually to his or her optimal capacity lies on child friendly setting under a professional care givers. Care givers serve as surrogate mothers offering nurturant to children. For early childhood in this global context to be realistically translated into full fledged policy action and programme, there is the need for concerted and continuous sensitization, referendum, coordination and collaborative synergy from spirited stakeholders at home and abroad.

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INCULCATING FUNCTIONAL LITERACY AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN:STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS

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Abstract

Literacy is the basic goal of education at all levels of education and the only universal weapon for any country aspiring for global - meaningful development. This paper aims at providing conceptual framework of literacy, x-raying the National Policy on Education (NPE) goals of primary education stating the national efforts of the government in line with global antecedents and community self-help project geared towards promoting literacy across the country. It equally looks at some principal agents as a strategy employed to improve basic skills and competency of school children towards literacy and national development so as to strengthen and sustain the functionality of education.

Introduction

Literacy is a worldwide agenda. This implies that the whole world is yearning for functional literacy skills and values that would have a bearing on the citizenry. In fact, it is an issue which every nation/ country including Nigeria has made; or is making a concerted effort along with spirited stakeholders in education in order to reduce illiteracy and ignorance to the barest capacity.

Illiteracy is the greatest social disease that affects developmental growth rate especially at individual level, freedom, wellbeing and status. Therefore, apart from the global antecedents geared toward reducing these social misfits, institutional agents have been up and doing right from time to time to see that people are learned and informed up to their feet and thus contribute

their quota in the society or environment where they come from. In line with this, Abdulwahab (2010) confirmed the statement of the prophet of God 'Muhammad' (PBUH) on the essence and significance of literacy versus knowledge. He said knowledge is power and a social weapon. Therefore, seeking for it remained an obligation upon every Muslim. He demonstrated literacy as the only weapon that makes an individual a socially acceptable citizen.

An attempt to conceptualize the word 'literacy' has generated a lot of controversies over time. Literacy is an elicited concept that had been defined to suit a particular or relative time. According to Okedera (1981), 'literacy connotes the ability to read and write. This describes basic literacy. Thus, literacy can refer to many areas of abilities. While Wagner (1990) in Alade (1996) opined that, the term literacy connotes aspects of reading and writing. The issue of functional literacy comes in and UNESCO (1956) in Alade (1996) juxtaposes that:

A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group.

To this end, literacy could mean an ability to read, speak, invest and embark on some numerical tasks and competency at one stage or the other. It is important to state that one's degree of qualifications or educational status may not have made individual fits competently but ability to teach and pass-on acquired skills unto generation meaningfully, constructively and brilliantly makes such graduate a literate fellow. It is very sad to say that many Nigerians speak good English but cannot write and so many write but cannot speak well. Can we tentatively say that such people are literate? It therefore becomes imperative to state the goals of primary education as entrenched in the National Policy on Education (NPE 2004 Pg₁₄) bearing in mind its reagents:

- 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 within the limits of the child's capacity and;
- g. Provide the child with basic tools for the educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

National Efforts on Literacy Emancipation

The word literacy carries a great deal of weight. The government in a bid to improve literary skill and competency among Nigerians introduced Universal Primary Education(UPE) of 1976, National Curriculum Conference of 1969, periodic revision of NPE, Universal Basic Education(UBE) and the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) and objectives of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) i.e. federal, state and local government levels respectively.

The UBE was put in place in September 30, 1999 by the former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. It is a life- long education that is made free, compulsory, functional and universal for every school- growing child. It includes the early childhood care and development education that incorporates nomads, migrant fishermen, almajirin, girl-child education, education of sub- cultural groups or less privileged groups and the integration of Qur'anic education into the UBE scheme. Equally, the establishment of mass literacy, adult and non- formal education centers across the states of the federation is indeed a national antecedent to improve literacy capacity of Nigerians. The establishment of skills acquisition centers, continuing education centers educations for practitioners, establishment of rehabilitation centers for the less privileged is a laudable effort. In addition, the

establishment of National Commission for Nomadic Education is considerable effort geared towards eradicating literacy proficiently. As part of the government efforts to inculcate functional literacy is the mandatory teaching and learning of computer education into the school core curriculum prescription (Abdulwahab, 2007).

According to Femi (1996), computer education is very important literacy program me in this 21th century. He said social critics have characterized our time as a transition from the 'industrial age' to the 'age of information' and that the jobs of information will involve receiving information from others, processing it in various ways and passing in the information along to others. Computer education such as the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networking, internets, is designated to do these three things; receive process and give back information. There is more to computer literacy than access to jobs and careers. Like ordinary literacy and Mathematics numeracy, computer literacy is a thinking skill. Computer literacy means "being able to tell a computer to do what you want to do". As such, the teacher who impacts literacy skills requires computer knowledge. Likewise, engineers, technicians, actuaries, economists, surveyors, bankers, lawyers, pilots and so on require functional literacy in the realm of computer appreciation.

In a related development, the Nation Newspaper of Friday October 1, 2010 scaled out some infrastructure development projects that have been put in place as part of the giant strides in UBE delivery. These include the construction of new classrooms amounting to N41, 009, 594, 444, procurement of 75,570,540 instructional / play materials for 1,493,352 teachers, professional development and training, provision of 16,356,812 primary 4 and 5 textbooks in Mathematics, English Language and Activity-Based Science, provision of assorted library resource materials for junior secondary school worth N1, 710,091. Equally, the Federal Government as a matter of giving hope to the disadvantaged/ physically challenged children, embarked on some deliverables form of special education projects in conjunction with the physically challenged children fund covering 368 schools/ centers across the country. The fund catered for 20,639 school – going children for 710 classrooms. It puts in place 344 resource rooms,

making provision for 3,616 sets of furniture for pupils and 1,259 furniture and 1,259 furniture for teachers respectively. Children with special learning needs fund cut across the provision of 75,255 instructional materials, trained 6,247 special teachers and provided 14,641 worth of equipment including computers, wheel chairs, Braille machines, T.V sets, radio sets etc. In addition to Federal Government commitment to reduce illiteracy among out of school children led to the introduction of UBE which was discussed in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA). Nigeria's membership of E-9 nations for the eradication of illiteracy recognizes that literacy level in Nigeria was still 52% in 1996 realizing the fact that out of the expected 21 million schools going age Nigerians, only 14.1 million were actually registered in the primary schools (UBEP, 2004).

The NPE (2004) identifies the philosophy and objectives of education in Nigeria and guaranteed the provision of basic education for the less privileged, sub- cultural groups, the nomads and migrant fishermen, Almajirin, integration of Qur'anic schools into the UBE program me with a view to universalizing education thereby reducing illiteracy to the barest level and making education functional, compulsory and accessible to all growing - school children irrespective of their background, condition and social affiliations.

International Effort on Literacy Emancipation

Education is an expensive enterprise which the Government cannot shoulder alone attracted stakeholders such as international agencies and development partners like World Bank, United Nations Children's Emergency Fund(UNICEF), United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Development Bank(ADP) to mention but a few. According to the Nation Newspaper October 1, 2010, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) is mandated by Section 11(9) (I and j) of the UBE Acts 2004 to facilitate and ensure smooth collaboration with International Development Partners (IDPs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to boost basic education delivery in Nigeria. In keeping with the mandate,

UBEC has attracted financial and technical supports from IDPs prominent among which are:

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Project for the construction of additional classrooms phase 1 in Niger, Plateau and Kaduna states between 2004 to 2008.
- Strengthening of Mathematics and Science (SMASE) in Niger, Plateau, and Kaduna States between 2006 to date.
- JICA for the construction of additional classrooms phase 2 in Kano, Katsina, Oyo, Adamawa, Gombe, Ebonyi and Borno states where Kano is now on board as a pilot state.
- Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) supported basic education in the area of classrooms construction in Kogi, Katsina, Gombe and Adamawa states are been implemented.
- China assisted four rural primary schools in Nigeria whose intervention is in Kaduna, Katsina , Ogun states and Federal Capital Territory(FCT).
- The World Bank, UNICEF and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are supporting states to Fast-track the achievement of EFA goals through support funds under the EFA-FTI funds.
- Education sector support program me in Nigeria (ESSPIN) is supporting institutional capacity building of UBEC and SUBEB officials in educational planning strategy.
- British Council is currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UBEC and the states to provide technical capacity for English language teachers in Lagos, Kano, Enugu, FCT Abuja, Rivers, Oyo, Sokoto, Adamawa and Yobe states. Under this programme, 1,000 primary school teachers of English language will be trained by March 2011 and 1,800 by October 2011 respective.

Community Efforts

The Universal Basic Education Self- Help projects are designed as a strategy to involve the community and private sector participation in basic

education delivery through the initiation, execution, administration and ownership of designated school projects. Basic education funding, administration and implementation are gradually becoming the responsibility not only of the government but that of the communities through Parents Teachers Association (P.T.As) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The Self-Help strategy has proved to be very rewarding in providing requisite infrastructure and services within the school environment as well as galvanizing popular community support and involvement in UBE delivery. Importantly, the strategy has instituted transparency and accountability in resources management, paved way for community ownership of UBE programme and increased the opportunities for increasing access, quality and equity in UBE delivery. Additionally, the strategy has several deliverables in key infrastructural components and other facilities that are essential to quality UBE delivery.

Prototypes of UBE community Initiated self-help projects between 2005-2009

	Project type	2005 (4,407 Schools)	2006 (7,532 Schools)	2007 (6,434 Schools)	2008 (4,225 Schools)	Total (22,598 Schools)
1	Construction of new classrooms	3,111	8,673	3,618	3,380	18,782
2	Renovation of classrooms	3,993	6,840	34,784	4,572	50,189
3	Teacher's /pupils furniture(sets)	60,098	126,150	127,200	94,800	408,248
4	Boreholes	79	120	87	55	341
5	Electricity	164	578	40	13	795
6	Vip toilets	-	714	543	179	1,439

Adapted from the Nation Newspaper, Friday, October 1, 2010

Principal Agents of Literacy

The researchers hold unto the following principal agents of literacy as follows:

1. **Home:** This is the first agent of socialization where a child learns the first words. It the first social contact where values are cleared, cultivated and planted. Therefore, charity and literacy start from home and that the type, nature and variety of training nurtured in to a child determine his wholesome life.
2. **School:** It is the second agent of socialization. It is an organized formal centre where the planted values, nurtured to a child from home are watered, hoed, fertilized and harvested under the proficiency of professional teachers who are skillful and competent in nature. It is the school that x-rayed the initial value cultivated unto a child which therefore determines his/her occupational tracts in life and further assists the child to cope in the globalized world.
3. **Others** are mass media through Tv, satellite, radio, printed media etc. Peer groups (gangs, cliques), religious organizations (mosque, church and shrine), economic institutions (banks, market, industries) etc.

In other to effectively instill functional and virile literacy in the child at school, the following suggestions could serve as viableoption:

- i. . The use of mother tongue as language of instruction as envisaged in the NPE (2004) especially at the beginning up to the middle level of the primary school would enhance better and functional literacy into the child.
- .ii., Teaching through the use of objects, drawing- line formation method, painting and colouring would go a long way in enhancing better writing skills.
- iii. The use of appropriate instructional resources and facilities, skills and methods for a designated topic. Such skills could include intellectual, creative, manipulative skills etc.

- iv. Appropriate techniques like inquiry, imitation, problem solving, montesorial methods, mnemonic methods and constant revision of works, allowing enough time for brainstorming and incubation, giving practical examples, demonstration and relative assessment and supervisory procedures so as to arouse confidence, quality assurance in education.
- v. By engaging the child in extra-curricular prescriptions and offerings like play, music and dance, engaging them for educational visits like excursions, vocational workshops, role modeling and drama.
- vi. Establishing a standardized library for the child in schools so as to serve as repository of information for reading, listening, speaking and writing. Children documentary books, mini-dictionary, computer, audio-visual materials and the use of learning inducing materials that further aids literacy to a greater level should be put in place for the growing child.
- vii. The budgetary allocation earmarked to education should be increased as envisaged by UNESCO. This would cater for basic infrastructural tools that would actualize effective teaching and learning.
- viii. Appropriate trained teachers should be allowed to undertake teaching either in a normal or semi-formal school. Such teachers should go for in-service training, workshops even beyond the country.

Conclusion

There is certainly no lack of effort on the part of spirited Nigerian individuals and organizations in promoting and inculcating functional literacy in the young generation. The government in consonance with Donor Agencies has been up and doing to see that illiteracy rate is reduced drastically. There is the need for continuous and collaborative synergy from home to school through self project,

campaigns and programmes to see that the right sensitization is devised to break the yoke of illiteracy. The project initiated in schools should be maintained to sustained better learning outcomes. In a bid to cross the hurdle from the 21st century to another century therefore calls for computer literacy to all stakeholders of education. With the revised NPE and MDGs made by the Government if realistically translated into full policy would definitely arouse better basic education for all.

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