

Goals of Primary Education as a Go-Between for Sustainable Living and Improved Security in Rivers State, Nigeria*

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ABSTRACT

The study titled “Goals of primary education as a go-between for sustainable living and improved security in Rivers State, Nigeria” randomly selected 410 primary six pupils in public primary schools as respondents. A Researcher-made questionnaire titled “Pupils Perception towards Primary Education Questionnaire” was the main instrument. It was a 15-item questionnaire and was responded to on the scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The data generated was analyzed using mean. The study established that primary education plays significant roles in enabling citizens live a life free of security challenges and sustainable living. Based on the findings, it recommends that: there is the need for government and non-governmental agencies to engage in programmes that would enlighten Nigerians to acquire primary education and equip them with necessary skills that can sustain their living. Besides, the study recommends that since non completion of primary education among Nigerians is held responsible for the level of security challenges and poor state of sustainable development, educational agencies such as the UBE Commission, Ministry of Education and state UBEC among others must step up efforts in ensuring that funds are made available so as to provide primary education free to all school age children in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A look at the goals of primary education in Nigeria indicates that it targets to lay a solid foundation for overall development of the society. Its mission warrants it to be described as that which has the goal of providing an ideal life for both the individuals and the society. It is therefore an errand boy who may wrongly or rightly deliver a message. The fact that it lays the foundation upon which societal development strives on, suggests that it is a go-between. In other words, the attainment of both individual and societal development is anchored on the extent that primary education is able to achieve its goals. Generally speaking, the goals of primary education can be interpreted to mean that which lays the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge and skills that would enable every member of the society to actively contribute towards societal growth and development. No individual can actively participate in efforts aimed at societal development if he/she does not acquire skills that can sustain his/her living. In the same vein, no society can attain reasonable growth and development if it surrounded by security challenges. Judging by the on-going account, it means there is a strong connection between primary education and indices of societal development; most especially sustainable living and a society free of security challenges.

Since the nucleus of this study is to ascertain the extent that primary education acts a key for sustainable living and a society free of security challenges, there is the need to reference relevant documents that support this view. The Federal Government (2004) in her National

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Policy on Education section 4 subsections 18 a, f and g respectively include the following as the goals of primary education:

- a. Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
- 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.

Evaluating the goals of primary education as presented in the preceding paragraph, one can confidently say that a child who undergoes primary education has acquired skills that would sustain his living in the society and the society is bound to be free from anti developmental tendencies such as insecurity, corruption and other vices. Contrarily, the Nigerian society among others cannot be described as a society free of security challenges nor has her citizens acquired skills that can warrant them to manifest features of sustainable living. No doubt, the attainment of some of the goals of primary education guarantees the society to attain a security less challenging society. This is why the National Policy on Education section 4 subsection 18c and d stress that the goals of primary education also include:

- c. providing citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; and
- d. mould of the character and developing sound attitude and morals in the child.

Interpretatively, a child who acquires citizenship education and a sound attitude and morals may rarely engage in any form of may-hem and societal vices. Considering the fact that primary education is accredited as a key player in attaining sustainable living in the society, one would naturally expect that its goals should be pursued with vigor as a result; certain statements or reports are bound to be the imagination of several persons. Such speculations include:

1. To what extent are the goals of primary education achieved?; and
2. Does the realization of the goals of primary education imply the acquisition of sustainable living and people living a life void of security challenges?

Since the provision of answers to the statements is the major target of this study, there is the need to provide a base upon which the discussions can be analyzed and synthesized. Consequently, the following research questions are posed.

1. To what extent are the goals of primary education being achieved?
2. What are the contributions of primary education towards sustainable living?
3. What are the contributions of primary education to the attainment of improved security situation in our society?

DEFINITION OF CONCEPT

Primary Education

Primary education is best defined as the education given in an institution for children aged 6-11 plus (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). The definition as put forward by the government seems to have only considered the ages of the children who attain primary education. Beyond age and the consideration that primary education targets at many goals; one can say that it is a go-between for both individual and societal development. In this study,

it is understood as a go-between for sustainable living and security challenges in Nigeria. Its status as a go-between for all round development is traceable to the fact that it is generally described as the foundation for all future education and learning. This understanding may have made UNESCO (1997) to say that it is not only the foundation for lifelong learning but also the foundation for sustainable development. UNESCO went further to say that it is the key to establishing and reinforcing democracy, development which is both sustainable and human and peace founded upon mutual respect and social justice. UNESCO, considering the significant roles of primary education towards the overall development of an individual and the society, expressed worry that over 100 million children between 6 and 11 years never attend school and tens of millions enter school only to drop out within a few months or years. This is to say that most people do not acquire primary education much more attaining the goals of primary education.

Sustainable Living

Ordinarily speaking, sustainable living could mean a high living standard, possibly higher than that of an individual living in a wealthy country. The implication of this assumption is as described by Mayor (1996) who said that sustainable living if it is to make sense must mean a closet full of clothes, a pantry full of food and a garage full of cars. In addition, Olinga and Lubyayi (2002) pointed out that the World Bank had argued that education can help to alleviate poverty and advance economic and social development. It was also pointed out that it can be achieved through numeracy and literacy and acquisition of valuable skills for workers. This is possible if individuals acquire sound primary education. Unfortunately, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 pointed out that in Africa, 340 million people or half the population lives on less than US \$1 per day. The mortality rate of children under 5 years of age is 140 per 1000 and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years. Only 58% of the population has access to safe water. There are only 18 mainline telephones per 100 people in Africa as against 567 for high income countries. Commenting on how to free Africa from issues obstructing her from attaining sustainable living, UNESCO (1997) argued that a public well informed of the need for sustainable development will insist that public educational institutions must include in their curricula the scientific and other subject matters needed to enable people participate effectively in the numerous activities directed towards achieving sustainable development. In other words education is expected to be the means for disseminating knowledge and developing skills for bringing about desired changes in behaviors, values and life styles. Such that public supports are promoted and free the society from catastrophe artificially or naturally caused.

Evaluating the primary school system in Nigeria presently, no one may confidently say that primary education is the fuel for change. This is so because ethical values known as the principal factor for social cohesion do not seem to be enforced in full terms by the school system. In recent times primary school children are observed as been active participants in cult activities and other social vices. This is to say that primary education may not have lived up to expectations in playing its roles to bring about the change in both tangible and intangible ways. From the fore-going, sustainable living could mean acquisition and demonstration of numeracy and literacy skills, avoidance of things that could lead to both artificial and natural catastrophe for instance (engage in poor waste disposal, participation in cult activities, among others). It can also include respect for ethical values of the society, access to potable water, good clothing, housing and proper sanitary maintenance of the environment, acquisition of skills for survival, effective use of means of disseminating information, proper health care.

Security Challenges

The concept of security challenges may mean different things to different people. The governor of Niger State, Muazu Babangida Aliyu (2012), in a public lecture noted that some persons see the concept as the inability of the nation's military to overcome internal and external aggression. On the other hand, nations like USA may see it as the inability to overcome international terrorism and promote their economic interest and democratic values. In Nigeria, therefore, security challenge may not only be interpreted to mean the physical protection and defense of our citizens and territorial integrity, it also includes the promotion of the economic wellbeing and prosperity of Nigerians in a safe and secure environment such that the attainment of national interests is guaranteed. This is to say that security challenges are those things that pose threat to the promotion of the core values, fundamental human rights and the entrenchment of social justice to engender peace, unity and development in Nigeria.

Beyond this, security challenges may also refer to things whose inadequacy may threaten the survival of an individual or community. It could mean food sufficiency, water supply, power supply, good roads, good schools, hospitals, functional infrastructure, decent housing, effective public transport system, to mention a few. Using the identified indicators as a yard stick to determine a nation's true security challenges Mainangwa and Uzodike (2012) noted that, the mention of Nigeria anywhere in the world increasingly stirs up images of poverty, crime, ethno-religious violence and terrorism. This view suggests that no part of Nigeria is free from security challenges. In the same vein, Anyadike (2013) noted that Nigeria has been bedeviled by ethno-religious conflicts with devastating human and material losses since the return of democracy in 1999. Kidnapping for ransom is indeed at a worrisome level in Nigeria such that almost every one may say that the security agencies are bereft of clues on how to stop it. Besides, the country in several places is known for reoccurring problems of terrorism, kidnapping, inter-communal violence, extra-judicial killings, suicide bombing of places of worship and other public owned institutions (Awolere, 2013). Beyond the points identified so far, security challenge may also be extended to mean poor access to elementary education. This is so because it has been identified that primary school enrolment has encountered yearly increase and constant dropouts. The preceding statement simply means that millions of Nigerians do not either enrol or complete primary education. Non-enrolment and completion of primary education among Nigerians may be held responsible for the various security challenges facing the country. The National Policy on Education (2004) in one of her goals articulated that primary education shall give the citizens the education for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society. It went further to say that it will mold the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child. A situation where millions of people do not acquire primary education, it means that they may be good agents of societal insecurity.

METHODOLOGY

Five (5) primary school pupils were randomly sampled from 89 public primary schools in Rivers State. The pupils were drawn from primary six (6). The choice of primary six pupils was based on the fact that they were considered to have almost completed primary education programme and they were in a better position to give relevant information that would assist the study. In all, a total of 445 pupils were sampled. Out of the 445 pupils, 410 were used for the analysis. The use of 410 was because 35 copies of the questionnaire were wrongly filled by the pupils. The main instrument for the study was a Researcher-made questionnaire titled "Pupils Perception Towards Primary Education Questionnaire. It was made up of two sections. Section one dealt with the bio-data of the respondents while Section Two was

concerned with the different variables of the study. Section Two was made up of 15 items. Items 1- 5 dwelt on the extent to which the goals of primary education have been achieved, items 6-10 were concerned with the contributions of the goals of primary education towards sustainable living and items 10 – 15 focused on the contributions of the goals of primary education in reducing security challenges in the society. The instrument was validated by a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Primary Education Studies of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. To sample the pupils from the 89 schools, the researcher trained three (3) research assistants to assist in administering the instrument. The scope of the training included how to guide the pupils to respond to the questionnaire, how to randomly select 5 pupils per school, how to obtain permission from the headmistress or headmaster before administering the questionnaire and approach the teachers whose pupils were selected for the study. Based on the inputs made by the Lecturer, the instrument was modified and considered valid for the study.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent are the goals of primary education achieved?

Table 1. Mean ratings of respondents on the achievement of the goals of primary education (N=410)

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1.	With primary education I speak and write well	2.8122	.85149	2 nd	Agree
2.	I engage in many buying and selling because I can read and write both words and numerals as a primary school child	2.7366	.93499	4 th	Agree
3.	With the things I have learnt at the primary school level I can do well in secondary school or engage in any trade or vocation of my choice	2.7951	.93137	3 rd	Agree
4.	Primary education has exposed me to what is right or wrong in the society	2.8220	.79424	1 st	Agree
5.	Primary education has taught me to be a good citizen rather than become a bad or passive citizen	2.7268	.89197	5 th	Agree
<i>Grand Mean and SD</i>		<i>2.7785</i>	<i>.8808</i>		

Table 1 showed the pupils’ mean rating of the extent of achievement of the goals of primary education. It specifically indicated that the pupils strongly agree that primary education has exposed them to what is right or wrong in the society (M=2.82, SD=.79). This was followed by the fact that primary education helps pupils communicate effectively with all and sundry in the society (M=2.81, SD=.85). The least as indicated by the respondents was that primary education has taught pupils to be good citizens rather than bad or passive citizens (M=2.72, SD=.89). The grand mean score indicated that primary education has significant roles (M=2.78, SD=.88).

Research Question 2: What is the effect of the goals of primary education on sustainable living?

Table 2. Mean ratings of respondents on the effect of goals of primary education on sustainable living. (N=410)

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1.	With the few things I have learnt about environmental pollution as a primary school child I cannot dispose waste wrongly	2.8000	.88949	3 rd	Agree
2.	I can use the skills I acquired as a primary school child to learn trade, crafts or work such that I will live well in the society	2.7805	.81885	4 th	Agree
3.	With what I have learnt in hygiene and other health education I cannot engage in any poor health practices such as eating without washing my hands, using sharp objects with someone, taking drugs without the doctors description etc.	2.7488	.89432	5 th	Agree
4.	With what I learnt as a primary school child, I can identify a good water	2.8829	.87673	2 nd	Agree
5.	I can avoid road accidents or taking wrong drugs because I can read and interpret instructions and signs with the little knowledge I have as a primary school child	3.1244	.80745	1 st	Agree
<i>Grand mean and SD</i>		<i>2.8673</i>	<i>.8574</i>		

Table 2 shows the mean rating of respondents on the effects of the goals of primary education on sustainable living. The table further shows that pupils strongly indicated that they can avoid road accidents or taking wrong drugs because they can read and interpret instructions and signs with the little knowledge they have as primary school children (M=3.12, SD=.810). This was followed by identification of a good water by the pupils (M=2.88, SD=.88) and the least was that with the extent they learnt hygiene and other health related issues, they cannot engage in any poor health practices (M=2.74, SD=.89). The grand mean and SD also indicated that the effect of the goals of primary education on sustainable living was positive (M=2.87, SD=.86).

Research Question 3: What are the contributions of primary education to the attainment of improved security situation in Nigeria?

Table 3 (Part-I). Mean ratings of respondents on the contributions of primary education to improved security situation (N=410)

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1.	As a primary school child I am taught to be a good citizen by not joining secret cult, armed robbery gang or any group that will disturb the peace of the society	3.1415	.90069	2 nd	Agree
2.	As a primary school child I cannot engage in cutting of oil pipelines, electric cables, destruction of other public facilities such as roads, school and hospital buildings	3.2244	.84979	1 st	Agree

Table 3(Part-II). Mean ratings of respondents on the contributions of primary education to improved security situation (N=410)

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Decision</i>
4.	As a primary school child, I am taught not to support or be part of those who bomb places, kidnap people or suicide.	2.8683	.86622	5 th	Agree
5.	In fact if any one does not acquire primary school education he/she may be ignorant and be part of all forms of vices that may be counter-productive to the society	2.9293	.89134	3 rd	Agree
<i>Mean and SD</i>		<i>3.0156</i>	<i>.8592</i>		

Table 3 shows mean of pupils on the contributions of primary education towards the attainment of improved security situation. Specifically, it shows that the respondents strongly indicated that they could not engage in cutting of oil pipelines, electric cables and destruction of other public facilities such as roads, schools, due to what they learnt in the primary school (M=3.22, SD=.85). This was followed by the fact that they were taught as good citizens not to participate in cultism or any form of terrorist acts (M=3.14, SD=.90). The least was that they could not be part of the people that engage in kidnapping, suicide bombing or inter-communal crises because they are meant to understand that they are evil (M=2.87, SD=.79).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings were made:

1. Primary education plays significant roles in enabling citizens communicate effectively and pursue secondary education, trade or vocation of their choice as well as becoming good citizens of the country.
2. Primary education helps to ensure sustainable living by teaching pupils how to dispose waste, acquire the needed skills for trade/crafts, exhibit the right health attitudes (use of good water, take drugs by following prescriptions) and avoid acts that could lead to accidents.
3. Primary education contributes to the attainment of improved security situations by enabling the pupils not to engage in cutting of oil pipe lines, electric cables, destruction of public facilities and discouraging them from participating in cultism, kidnapping, suicide bombing or inter communal crises.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are discussed under the following:

1. The extent to which the goals of primary education are achieved;
2. The contributions of primary education towards sustainable living; and
3. The contributions of primary education towards the attainment of a society with less security challenges.

The Extent to Which the Goals of Primary Education are Achieved

The study established that some of the goals of primary education that are achieved include reading and writing skills; thereby enabling the citizens to communicate effectively, pursue

secondary education, acquire skills that would enable Nigerians participate in any trade or vocation and behave as good citizens. An examination of the impact of primary education on its beneficiaries indicates that the goals achieved are lifelong skills. Corroborating this view, UNESCO (1997) explained that it is not only the foundation for lifelong learning but also the foundation for sustainable development. The view that it is a foundation for lifelong learning and sustainable development justifies why this study describes it as a go-between sustainable living and attainment of a society with less security challenges. The fact that it is key to attaining an ideal society notwithstanding the evidence are abundant to indicate that a good number of people are yet to acquire primary education in Nigeria.

The proposition that not all Nigerians have acquired primary education, prompted Usman (2006) to report that the Nigerian primary school statistics from late 1980's revealed that boys from the rural part of Northern Nigeria do not enroll nor complete primary school education due to their cattle business and that the Anambra boys are equally accused of engaging in other economic ventures against attaining primary education. Going by Usman's submission, it means that a good number of Nigerians may not have acquired the skills that would enable them to attain sustainable living or a life of less security challenges. The situation that most Nigerians are yet to acquire primary education could be held responsible for the insecurity situations in Nigeria and passing a life that can be described as less sustainable living.

The Contributions of the Goals of Primary Education or Primary Education towards Sustainable Living

Having discussed primary education in general terms, there is the need to examine the direct impact of primary education as regards sustainable living. In this context, the study found out that primary education helps to ensure sustainable living by teaching how to dispose waste, acquire the needed skills for trade/crafts, exhibit the right health attitudes (use of good water, taking drugs according to prescriptions) and avoid acts that could lead to accidents. A summation of sustainable living in this study simply means acquisition and manifestation of lifelong skills such as proper waste disposal, health practices, interpretation of road signs, availability and use of good water and living a life devoid of poverty where individuals have skills that will make them attain advanced economic and social development.

The indices as identified by this study correspond to its meaning as a Latin word 'sustinere' referring to 'maintain' or 'support'. In the light of this, Olinga and Lubyayi (2002) pointed out that the World Bank had argued that education can help to alleviate poverty and advance economic and social development. Accumulation of these views led to the conclusion made by Okebukola (2011) who said sustainable education equips the learner with knowledge, skills and attitudes to be an entrepreneur, an innovator and many more.

Commenting on sustainability, Kemjika (2014) explained that education supports the health and quality of life of present and future generations while living within the limits of its social and natural systems. Kemjika's submission credits the basis upon which this study contends that sustainability refers to good health practices, skill acquisition, and compliance to safety practices, among others. Interpretatively, primary education ought to be or is a good vehicle of change. This is so because almost all the issues that relate to sustainability borders around awareness. Contrarily, the public does not exhibit attitudes that portray that its members are well informed on matters related to having the right knowledge and skill to free man and society from artificial and natural problems.

The Contributions of Primary Education towards Attaining a Society with Less Security Challenges

The third finding of this study states that primary education contributes to attainment of a society with less security challenges by enabling the pupils not to engage in cutting of oil pipe lines, electric cables, destruction of public facilities and discouraging them from participating in cultism, kidnapping, suicide bombing or inter communal crises. This finding notwithstanding, there are rampant cases of insecurity problems in Nigeria. The country in several places is known for reoccurring problems of terrorism, kidnapping, inter-communal violence, extra-judicial killings, suicide bombing of places of worship and other public-owned institutions (Awolere, 2013). Besides, the degenerated nature of our core values, fundamental human rights and the entrenchment of social justice to engender peace, unity and development in Nigeria cannot warrant any one to say that the Nigerian society is not faced with security challenges nor would primary education be described as a good agent of a secured society.

Beyond this, security challenges in this study may also be understood as those things that may threaten the survival of an individual or community. It could mean food sufficiency, water supply, power supply, good roads, good schools, good hospitals, functional infrastructure, decent housing, effective public transport system, to mention a few. Considering the content of the last sentence, one may be poised to ascertain if those working in the dysfunctional hospitals, schools and other public sectors are not products of the primary school system? Perhaps the situation is the way it is because some research reports indicate that the rate with which pupils complete primary education is still very poor. The Federal Ministry of Education (2006) in collaboration with the Universal Basic Education Commission conducted a national school census and found out that primary six completion rates were 69.2% in 2004 and 67.5% in 2005 and it may not have improved till now. If the primary school system is yet to attain 100% completion rate, one can see reasons why the society is witnessing several forms of security challenges.

CONCLUSION

There are many agencies responsible for ensuring sustainable development and attaining a society free of security challenges. One such agency is primary education. The fact that it plays a significant role in ushering a society that is advanced in both human and technological development, the study describes it as a go-between for sustainable development and security challenge. No doubt it has the propensity to guarantee any society a life of sustainability devoid of security challenges, poverty, ignorance, superstition, illiteracy and counterproductive skills. Unfortunately, many Nigerians are yet to acquire primary education. Non-acquisition of primary education by all and sundry suggests volumes of factors responsible for low level of sustainable living and high level of security challenges in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Non-acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes taught at the primary school level by Nigerians is reported by this study as a chief cause of Nigerians passing a life lesser than sustainable living, therefore, there is the need for government and non-governmental agencies to engage the mass media in programmes that would enlighten Nigerians on the need to acquire primary education; mostly in areas like Anambra and parts of Northern Nigeria.

2. Since non-completion of primary education among Nigerians is held responsible for the level of security challenges and poor state of sustainable development, educational agencies such as the UBE Commission, Ministry of Education and others must step up efforts in ensuring that all and sundry completes primary school education in Nigeria.
3. Since primary education is considered a strong tool to attain sustainable living and a society with less security challenges, the state, philanthropic organizations and individuals need to generously donate towards the funding of primary education so that it will be indeed free to all school age children.

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