CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATING NIGERIAN CHILD IN RURAL AREAS: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Education is regarded as an instrument for national development and social change as well as the process of preparing an individual to become a functional and acceptable member of the society, it is widely recognized as a veritable tool for addressing issues of poverty, underdevelopment, population, illiteracy, ignorance, health problems, conflicts as well as sustainability. One of the objectives of education is to ensure the character and moral development of the young learners and the development of sound attitudes. Based on this fact that the paper focused on the challenges facing educating Nigerian child in rural areas: implications for national development, the paper discusses the concept of Rural societies, National Development, child and the developmental characteristics and problems bedeviling the social life of the rural dwellers such as poverty, cultural challenges, psychological and socialization challenges, others include; lack of good road networks, portable drinking water, health care delivery services, high level of ignorance/illiteracy, socio-economic status, as well as access to electricity. It also discusses the effects of these challenges on educating Nigerian child such as lack of qualified teachers, non-availability of teaching and learning materials, poor supervision of schools as well as low turnout of both students and teachers to mention but a few. The implications of these effects on national development such as poor production of incompetent school graduates, rampant cases of school dropout and withdrawal from schools, low morale for further education to mention but a few were also discussed. Finally conclusion and some suggestions were made to include; community and religious leaders should intensify efforts in motivating teachers, parents and larger society on the need to educated rural child in Nigeria for national development. All tiers of government should among others redouble their efforts in making the more viable for human living.

Key Words: Child, Rural Area, National Development.

1. Introduction

Education is regarded as an instrument for national development and social change as well as the process of preparing an individual to become a functional and acceptable member of the society, it is widely recognized as a veritable tool for addressing issues of poverty, underdevelopment, population, illiteracy, ignorance, gender exclusion, health problems, conflicts and tolerance, human right as well as sustainability. One of the objectives of education is to ensure the character and moral development of the young learners and the development of sound attitudes. Since education is regarded as a means of making individuals understand their society and its structure, there is need for all and sundry irrespective of who they are, where they live to be educated. There is no doubt
That education is the central theme in our lives as well as the bedrock of any meaningful development in any society. It prepares the younger generation for life that lies ahead and it informs adult of the world about themselves. For the effective national development in Nigeria, the issue of quality education and equal educational opportunities must be taken serious, both between rural and urban as well as boy and girl child-education (Haruna, 2011). Against this background, this paper presents a discussion on the Challenges Facing Educating Nigerian Child in Rural Areas: Implications For National Development.

Rural areas in Nigeria are characterized by series of under-developmental problems such as poor basic health facilities, good road networks, portable drinking water, high illiteracy level and prevalence of extreme poverty among others (Haruna & Onyebu, 2011). These developmental problems are believed to be challenges affecting the process of educating Nigerian child in the rural areas. It is therefore obvious that sustainable national development is to a large extent, synonymous with the level of development as well as the education given to rural child, there is need for taking the issue of equal education opportunities especially as its relates to the rural child in Nigeria more serious. As a result of such under developmental characteristic of rural areas, teacher are mostly scared from accepting to work in schools situated in the rural areas and supervisors willingness to regularly supervise such schools is undermined. The issue of poverty and ignorance that dominate the social life of the majority of the rural populace also affects their attitude and level of participation towards the education of their children.

Since education is regarded as a tool for social nobility, basic policies should guide and govern possible implementation of all educational programmes in the country, for speedy eradication of illiteracy and empowering citizens (Inuwa, 2009). Educational laws should be strong, liberal and universal to compensate the status and ability of the less privilege by forcing, redirecting and implementing strategies to attract and ease schooling, irrespective of status, location or age in Nigerian societies, by having affordable, accessible and available (FGN, 2004). In light of the above facts for the National development, this paper discusses on the challenges facing educating Nigerian child in the rural areas: Implications for National Development.

Rural societies: are strongly conservative in ideology, and they strongly adhere to their primitive pattern of life. Their ideology govern their interpretation of the wider world and determines for them the selection and arrangement of life style which is entirely different from the urban societies (Mahuta & Inuwa, 2008). Rural societies to Haralambos and Holborn (2008) are an association in which there is social interaction of the people and their institutions in the local area. It consists of people living on wide area of farmsteads and in a hamlet or village which form the sensible Centre of common social activities.

National Development can be described as the process of economic and social transformation. It is the development of economic, social, political and educational life of the people of a given society. National development to Yahaya, Yunusa and Muntari (2011) connotes the process of maintaining the available National resources to solve the present problems and that of future needs. Bakori (2011) maintains that Development involves all the activities involved in preparing a person’s or nation’s potentials, attitude, material, scientific and technological process. It is a growth and continuous change in the nation such as material, physical, institutional, physiological and organizational changes of any nation. Child is regarded as a group of person is not fully and physically developed, child could be a boy or a girl. To many psychologies, a child is any person between 0-13 years of age who has not fully developed and matured.

Different theories both psychological and social have postulated on the area of child education, the most famous one, is that of Piaget cognitive development theory of child. Piaget believes that the thinking of younger children differs in significant ways from the thinking of older children.
Parents and teachers should take into account a child’s level of cognitive development (Busari, 2011). Piaget in his stages of cognitive development from sensory motor to formal operational stages assists the child to engage in imitating the mental images he has developed, while observing others. He further states that, it may also help the child develop more complex forms of thinking as he strives to reflect upon the way things behave as he interacts with them and a stimulator of social learning as the child what is acceptable and not acceptable to the people with whom he is interacting with (Isah, 2004).

The implication of Piaget theory to the teaching and learning among rural children include; teachers should encourage the following in the classroom:

a. Focus on the process of learning rather than the end product of learning.

b. Using collaborative, as well as individual activities so children can learn from one another.

c. Devising situations that present useful problems, and create disequilibrium in the child, especially among rural and urban, poor parent’s children and rich parent’s children.

d. Evaluate the level of the child’s development, so suitable tasks can be set.

Hence, this theory concerned with children not all learners, it focuses on development rather than learning, it is based upon biological maturation as well as learner’s readiness. To both parents and teachers, Piaget shows that life is a continuous creative interaction between the child and the environment. Therefore the rate of learning (development) depends upon the nature of the child’s encounter with the environment. The degree of this counter affects the intellectual development and is also determined by agreement between child’s mental structure and environmental situations (Shallah, 1995), an understanding of this relationship will facilitate intellectual development with much improvement in child education and rearing.

2. Challenges Facing Educating Nigerian Child in the Rural Area

In an attempt to discuss the challenges facing education in Nigeria Inuwa (2009) maintained that for any programme to achieve its goals there should be wide range of coverage of the participants. In Nigeria, the larger population resides mostly in the rural areas, who mostly suffer from lack of access to information and good school facilities; to him these factors militate against the success of educating Nigeria rural child. To support this point Inuwa (2008) confirmed that apathy and parental poverty also affect the process of educating Nigerian child especially in the rural areas, as it determined those that attend school, how long to stay in school as well as chances of completion the school or not, rural families and less privileges suffer from school attendance i.e late coming, truancy to mention but a few.

To Omotayo (2009) the following factors affect the performance of students especially in the rural area. Parent children relationship, domestic works such as hawking which is most parental among rural children’s, parents level of education, environmental and so on. Oloko (1994) observed that in Nigerian rural areas some children are kept at home on market days and after school hours to hawk around, those children have the little or no time to go through their school works. In a related literature, Deng & Deng (2007: 1-18) identify the following as the challenges of educating Nigerian child.

a. Poverty: Is one of the notorious problems in developing nation especially among the rural population it is a social, economic and psychological problem that affect the rural people. It is a severe lack of income below poverty line), assets (property), basic social welfare facilities such as pipe born water, electricity, good food, medical service, good clothing, good education and severe absence of a means of livelihood. In summary poverty are notorious social, economic and psychological factors can be held accountable for lack of appropriate ways of educating Nigerian child in the rural areas.
b. Cultural challenges: Due to the characteristics of rural areas in Nigeria such as greater homogeneity, lack of social amenities and so on. Rural child tend to tack longer time before understand a specific concept of unlike urban and semi-urban children, for example while those in the urban areas have access to computer and computer related gadget rural child known nothing about computer. In some communities some children has to for Almajiri at lower age, this will also constitute a great challenges to their education.

c. Psychological challenges: Some parents may not be able to provide stimulating intellectual environment for their children, leaving materials such as reading writing and listening equipment are not a fordable such children may become depressed, frustrated and emotionally maladjusted because of lack of classroom participation.

d. Socialization challenges: Socialization is the process in which individual learn the attitudes, values and actions appropriate for members of a particular culture because rural orientation, rural child feel and act in society compared to their urban countries parts in Nigeria. Reason is the fact that child socialization process is affected y many social factors such as parents, home school, religious bodies, peer group influence as well as the large society to which he/she belong.

In her book titled: Psychology of Adolescence for colleges and universities, Busari (2010) identify the following as rural child school problems:- fear of going to school, absenteeism without permission, dropping out as well as academic underachievement. Ikwuba (2010) define poverty as a situation where an individual or groups of people have inadequate resources and access to basic need of life. World Development Report (1990) conceived poverty as an inability of an individual or group of people to obtain a minimum standard of living. World Bank and UNDP (2001) stated that 70% of the Nigerian population live in poverty and seven (7) out of every ten (10) live below the poverty line of less than one U.S dollar a day, poverty is more severe in Nigerian rural areas which make teaching and learning very difficult to both teachers and learners, because rural population constitutes mostly Nigerian peasantry poor and the largest illiterate group (Ikwuba, 2010).

Other challenges include what Ekong (2003) pointed as deplorable condition of rural setting in Nigeria such as lack of infrastructural facilities, basic services such as electricity, water, health centers, good road networks, educational institutions and agricultural inputs which are required to meet the needs of the modern society and man, all these hinders the process of educating child. Other challenges of poverty in the area of educating child include; poverty is associated with factors such as malnutrition, low birth weight, poor health care as well as inadequate child health care, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, unhealthy environment, poor mental and physical potentials, it destroy hope, tolerance, self-satisfaction and personal competence, while these are social and psychological factors affecting education and learning process of the child. (Ikwuba, 2010).

In his report Ikwuba (2010) confirmed that, it is not rare in rural Nigeria to see cases of 100 pupils under a teacher or pupil sitting under trees outside the school building because of lack of classrooms, majority of primary schools lack water, electricity, and toile facilities, for example on average, there is only one toilet for 600 pupils in the rural primary schools in Nigeria. The report also highlighted that not only poverty of income exist in the rural areas but that of ideas as majority of the rural dwellers are illiterate. Illiterate parents are blunt tools in the academic life of a learning child. They cannot assist the child in assignments, insist upon successful behaviour, understand the value of investing in education of their child, encourage and motivate the child (Ekong, 2003). Parental role in children’s upbringing is a crucial one, the economic pressures on the average Nigerian family today is a serious factor to be considered when talking about parental responsibility to children’s education and upbringing (Salawu, 2004: 104).
In a related study by Mahuta and Inuwa (2008) sees the problem of teaching and learning in rural societies as; social institutions such as family, school, law enforcement agents and systems appears to have collapsed in the rural societies, the existing relationship of the rural societies and central government shows clearly the effect of macro stratification and social isolation, welfares provided to the teachers and students of the rural societies are not encouraging, zeal to learn by rural societies is not encouraging making the government effort toward provision schools and school infrastructure fruitless, lack of equality in the provision distribution and allocation of developmental chances between rural and urban areas.

In their own paper titled: addressing the challenges and prospect of a falling education system in Nigeria at so, Fabunmi and Fabunmi (2010) summarized the following as the challenges facing education in Nigeria; inadequacy or lack of funding, inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, lack of adequate planning as well as curriculum constrains. Other scholars that look at the challenges of educating Nigerian child include; Abdulwasiu, Alkanchi and Nayaya (2013) whose sees the problems to include: corruption and bad leadership poverty level of the population, poor link between education and job opportunities, lack of qualified teachers, lack of funds and so on.

In related study by Boyi, Sokoto and Babuga (2013) titled: educational challenges in Nigeria and relevance of transformation agenda, summarized the following as the challenges if education in Nigeria; Gender, inequality: - there is gender disparity in the population of students in Nigeria especially in the rural areas, below is a table showing the gender representation of literate people across region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South east</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South west</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North west</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North east</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Unicef in Boyi, Sokoto and Babuga (2013): 54.

Others include: dearth of qualified teachers, teaching requires a vast range of knowledge, ability, skill, judgment and understanding. Inadequate infrastructures, it includes classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, playfields, school farms and gardens as well as provision of water and sanitation. These have to be of appropriate quantity, size and quality to meet the minimum standards of any meaningful teaching and learning condition. Finding of education, it requires adequate funding from lower to upper level as each level compliment the other. Inadequate inspection and supervision of schools especially those situated in the rural areas, finally overcrowding of classrooms, as well as hostels in the case of boarding school. One of the major under developmental characteristic of rural areas, that affect the changes of education of rural child, is that of inadequacy or lack of health care delivery services. Most of the Nigerian rural populace depends on the health services of hospitals and clinic that are located in the urban and semi-urban areas, which are mostly far away from the villages. These explain why villagers are described as the home of diseases. This greatly affect the social life of rural dwellers as they always live at risk of various diseases and sickness, this may in turn affect both students and teachers in such areas, and to a large extent dwindle the educational development of such areas.

Electricity problem although is a national problem due to the inadequacies associated with the development of the sector, but it is more serious in most of the Nigerian rural areas, this place the development of rural populace to yet another miserable experience. This will also affect both school activities for example practical in computer and computer-related areas, teachers morale as well as availability of teaching and learning materials that require energy (Haruna and Onyebu, 2011).
Other challenges include motorable roads that link most rural areas to cities are in bad situation, in spite of some recent development efforts being made by political class in the area of road construction. It is still inadequate in rural areas. A very reasonable number of villages are cut off from the urban and semi-urban areas for lack of effective road network. These affect not only economic activities in the area but educational and social development of teeming population leaving in such places. Rural areas in Nigeria are also characterized with inadequate or lack of portable drinking water (Haruna & Onyebu, 2011). Most villages in Nigeria depend on local wells, ponds, lakes as well as nearby streams for their drinking water as against what is obtained in the urban and most semi-urban centers. This lead to outbreak of many diseases, especially cholera, guinea worm and so on, in most of the Nigerian rural area a such in no small measure affect not healthy living but even the educational opportunities of the rural child, since most teachers tend to run away from such areas.

The issue of ignorance and high level of literacy among rural populace, this affects economic, social and educational life of the people residing in the rural areas. Onyebo (2000) confirms that Nigeria is currently rated among the nine countries in the world with the largest population of non-literates people. This majority of the rural populace cannot perceive the value of education, as such cannot effectively contribute toward National Development.

3. Effect of Rural Areas Characteristic on Child’s Educational Development In Nigeria.

There is no doubt that child’s education is a function of the heredity and environmental factors as stated by many writers in the field of education. The nature and characteristics of the environment under which child is brought up often makes significant impact on his/her social, economic an educational development, it affects his interest and attitude towards schooling (Haruna & Onyebu, 2011). It is therefore; very imperative to conclude that nature of Nigerian rural areas affect child’s educational opportunities, interest and attitude which may in turn affect the educational development of the nation.

It has been stated that the majority of the rural populace of Nigeria are poor and live in abject poverty. The implications of this to child’s education and national development are that parents cannot meaningfully support the educational pursuit of their children, this lead to reason why such children engaged into petty trading and hawking before going to or instead of going to school. This also affects child’s punctuality and regular attendance of school which results in poor performance of pupils or sometimes withdrawal from school.

Also poor physical developmental condition of the rural areas of Nigeria is also not favorable to the development of child education well as national development. This is so because many writers observed, rural areas in Nigeria are characterized by such under developmental conditions such as in adequacy or lack of basic social amenities as portable drinking water, electricity supply, good road network, health care services and social networks. This grossly affects the quality of education to be received by rural child in Nigeria as most teachers resist being posted to serve in such places which may result into acute shortage of teachers in the village school.

Ignorance and high level of illiteracy among rural populace also affects their attitude towards education of their wards; hence it results into low enrolment rate in schools. Haruna (2011) stated that level, and quality of education given to the citizen of a nation has significant effect on the National development. Because education help to provide people with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to effectively participate and contribute towards the development of their nation. Therefore, there is need for adequate funding of education so as to cater for the UNESCO standard of budgetary allocation to education of any nation, consequently infrastructural facilities such as: teaching and learning materials, libraries, laboratories, sport and
practical materials, gardens and equipment need to be adequately procured especially in rural schools.

4. Implications for National Development

National development connotes social, economic and educational transformation of any nation that has to do with development of the people within that society. The level and the quality of education given to the citizens significantly affect its national development. This is because Education is regarded as an instrument for national development and social change as well as the process of preparing an individual to become a functional and acceptable member of the society. In spite of the relevant of education to national development, it is regrettable to state that the developmental characteristics of the rural areas in Nigeria is detrimental to the educational pursuit in terms of actualizing or achieving the learning potentials or having access to school.

Many children in the rural areas in Nigeria do not have the opportunity of being enrolled into schools; end up as school drop-outs or receive poor quality education. These phenomena is linked to the prevalence of extreme poverty, high level of ignorance and illiteracy among the rural populace, poor teaching and learning environment, inadequacy or lack of qualified teachers in the rural schools as well as lack of regular supervision of such schools. This study therefore suggests that:-

3.1 Those children who drop-out of schools due to environmental constraints surrounding the process of educating them in the rural schools. This also constitute another group of human capital waste, this confirms that they are among the groups who cannot meaningfully contribute towards bringing national development, because of their failure to complete schooling.

3.2 Those children in the rural areas who missed the opportunity of going to school have missed a vital tool of education as a means of preparing them for meaningfully and effective service to the society and national development.

3.3 It is also reasonable to state that even those children who managed to complete their schooling process in the rural areas often end up with poor quality education which does not prepare them well for further education and for effective service in the society, this again is detrimental to the issue of national development.

5. Conclusion

Conclusion drawn from this paper indicated that education is the central theme of our lives as well as the bedrock of any meaningful development of any nation as it prepare younger generation for life as well as informs adult of the world around them. The paper highlighted some of the characteristics of rural areas that lead to poor education of the rural child in Nigeria such as illiteracy, poverty, inadequate social amenities and so on. Finally the paper look at effect of under developmental characteristics of rural areas to the education of the children as well as National Development, such as poor attitude towards education of their wards, poor physical condition, engaging of some children into petty trading and hawking leading to lack of punctuality to school as well as abrupt school dropout. These and many more remain bottleneck to the education of rural child in Nigeria as well as National Development.

6. Suggestion

From the discussion made on the challenges facing educating Nigerian child in rural areas: implementations for National development, the paper suggest the following:

i) Community and religious leaders should intensify efforts in motivating teachers, parents and larger society on the need to educate rural child in Nigeria for national development. There is also need for government to evolve a participatory poverty alleviation programme that will take
into consideration of the needs of poor parents especially in the Nigeria rural areas. Also more realistic approach needs to be employed in order to empower the rural populace so as redeem them from poverty and its consequential effects.

ii) There is need for all the stakeholders in education to intensify effort in the provision and maintenance of equipment in the rural schools as well as infrastructure such as classroom buildings, office and staff residential accommodation, also rural schools need to be adequately staffed.

iii) Government at all level needs to make much more serious effort in the provision of basic social infrastructure and social amenities such as good roads, health facilities and services, electricity and so on to the rural populace, so that rural areas can be conducive for both students, teachers as well as general society

iv) There is need for intensive public awareness on the significance importance of education to the rural areas. Rural schools should be made more children friendly in terms of good teachers, adequate teaching and learning materials, good class rooms and office accommodation.

References


