
Nigerian Learning System and Challenges Confronting it

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Abstract: Every society clearly define their developmental needs and plans. No society can develop without first and foremost developing her educational system. The educational system and the way it carried out becomes the driver that takes every other developmental needs of the economy. Put in another form, all sections of a country's development plans hinge on the educational system of the country. The educational system of the country also depend on the learning system or condition through which the goals of education could be achieved. When the learning system is faulty, the educational goals of the society is in jeopardy. Therefore, to achieve the goals of education, the learning system must be fixed appropriately to overcome challenges. Upon this background, this paper attempts to examine the Nigerian learning system vis-à-vis our educational goals. It also examines the challenges of our learning system and proffers solutions and recommendations.

Key words: Learning system, education, learning, policy, challenges.

Introduction

The concept learning, refers to the acquisition of facts terms, generalizations etc. It relates also to the acquisition of habits, perception, attitudes, ideas and the social adjustments (Ituen, 2004). Cotton, (1958) defines learning as “a relatively permanent change in behaviour or potentials behaviour resulting from experience”. This means, learning and retention could not be separated.

Anusien (2000) sees learning as any enduring change in behaviour that is as a result of experience and which causes people to face latter life situations differently. Learning here could be referred to as education. Though, learning is a process of education, both of them complement the other and cannot be separated. Both of them too changes the behaviour of the learner. Some psychologists have attempted to define the concept, learning. Kimble (1961) sees learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour potentiality which occurs as a result of constant practice. Lovell, (1973), defines learning as a change in human disposition or capability which can be retained and which is not simply ascribable to the process of growth. Marx (1969), defines learning as a relatively enduring change in behaviour which is a function of prior behaviour.

From the foregoing, the concept learning could be said to be synonymous with change. However, learning could be positive or negative functions of the system. Its implications, either positive or negative could impact on the social, emotional, economic, political and

moral life. As a social system, our educational system could have positive or negative impacts due to the type of learning formula that the government of the day adopts.

Basic Principles of Learning

Learning does not take place in a vacuum. It follows certain laid down guidelines. Hence, psychologists argue that these principles must be present before learning could take place. Anushiem (2000), listed the principles as follows:

- (a) Principle of Readiness,
- (b) Principle of Need,
- (c) Principle of Frequent Practice,
- (d) Principle of Satisfaction,
- (e) Principle of Association and
- (f) Principle of Recency.

Psychologists believe that learning takes place in children when they are ready to do so. It is when children are ready that they learn best in school. This also applies to mental maturation. A child should not be forced to be in the class when that child is not intellectually and mentally ready.

Principle of Need here means that every learning outcomes of the child should be channeled towards his needs. Learning should solve the need challenges of both the child and the society.

The Principle of Frequent Practice means that the child learns better when he is drilled in constant practice. This is in line with the saying, "Practice makes material, the more insights he develops and more discoveries made by the student.

In the **Principle of Satisfaction**, it emphasizes that learning should be made more interesting, stimulating meaningful and motivating. Through, this, the child gets satisfaction from the learning outcomes. Uninteresting, unstimulating learning outcomes do not satisfies the learner's conscience.

On the other hand, the **Principle of Recency** emphasizes that a learner only remembers those things which occur recent and which at initial learning were meaningful, teachers who teach with illustrations that happen recently are likely to achieve results. Children learn easily when they remember recent events as either illustration or as example.

Learning Style

Generally speaking, learning styles could be said to be categorized into three main broad areas. Ituen (2004), listed three learning styles as follows: the teaching style, the learning

style and the learning environment. For learning to be said to occur, the teachers methodology in his/her teaching is important. If a teacher employs the wrong teaching method in the classroom, the students could not learn the material. Equally, the students learning style enhances good learning habits. Assignments, projects, excursions, visitations, availability of texts and other learning materials must be present. Experiments, practicals and practical demonstrations is also important. Most importantly, under which environment is learning taking place? The facilities such as buildings, libraries, laboratories, boarding facilities, classroom facilities such as furniture must be present before meaningful leaning could take place.

Therefore, the combination of these three guarantees effective and efficient learning for the child.

Broadly speaking, learning styles could not be mentioned without the mention of Benjamin Blooms Taxanomy of learning. Blooms (1956) developed a well modeled learning styles which educationists referred to as Bloom taxanomy of educational objectives. Blooms categorized learning into the following three basic areas: cognitive style, affective style, and psychomotor style.

Cognitive Styles

These are concerned with learning which passes information it indicates a learner's style of perceiving, thinking, problem solving and remembering. It is concerned about mental or intellectual growth. It takes knowledge and understanding of the information as the basics of learning a material. Here, learners could remember, recall a concept.

Affective Styles

These refer to the motivational processes that ideal with attention, emotion, valuing and expectancy. They deal with perseverance, persistence, curiosity, etc. Every learning style should be able to inculcate such values as honesty, patriotism, hardwork etc. to the learners. There must be affection and love virtues that would shape the mind of the learner in living with the broader society after leaving school.

Psychomotor/Physiological Styles

Learning outcomes must teach the body functions. They are modes of response which are based on sex, quality of personal nutrition and health and the pattern to react to the environment. Teachers should be on guard for symptoms of physiological problems. As the child grows, he/she should be taught how to use the hands for the manipulation of certain skills to improve his/her learning styles. Such physiological features as hands are important in learning such as writing, drawing, moulding, dissecting etc.

The Nigerian school learning system.

The school is the tool which co-ordinates all the learning activities in the society. Hence, Ezewu, (1983), described school as a social organization which is a part of the community and had some goals which it pursues in accordance with the community or society where it is built.

Before the arrival of school education in Nigeria, children were educated at home. There were however, little variations from one community to another, but their traditional education pursued one goal and that was character training Ogbonah (1986). With the arrival of school education and the church, instead of helping the community to pursue what they valued, the school opposed the traditional system. As a result, many people refused to send their children to the school. Later, the school education were embraced when parents realized the importance of school education through the church.

Nigerian school system has passed through different stages of development. The British government that colonized Nigeria bequeathed their own system of education which centered much on cognitive style of learning-knowledge. In 1977, the Federal government reviewed their school education through the formulation of National Policy on Education (NPE) which has gone several reviews since 1977. The current is in 2014. Here in the policy of education, the goals of all levels of education in Nigeria were spelt out.

The goals of primary school education are to prepare children for life, teach them the culture of the society and give those with the necessary background the opportunity to proceed to secondary school, and those with less opportunity to proceed to other areas such as craftworks trading, agriculture etc.

The goals of secondary school education include preparing the students for life, selecting students for the next stage of education. Those who will not proceed to the next stage of education are prepared for employment and other useful livings within their community.

For the teacher training college, the goals are to produce highly motivated, conscientious and successful classroom teachers for a limited level of education. To develop in the teacher, the spirit of inquiry, creativity, nationalism and a sense of belonging. To make the teacher to be intellectually, professionally and socially capable of participating in the life of the society.

The goals of the University are to prepare the students to pursue knowledge, impart and spread that knowledge and offer expert service to the nation. It should be mentioned that while Colleges of Education and Polytechnics are expected to produce medium level, manpower, university is expected to produce high level manpower.

While primary education starts at the age of six years, it is expected to run for six years – Junior Primary 1-3, Senior Primary (New Basic) 4-6. After this, the child gets his First School Certificate. The Secondary also has six classes – Jss 1-3 and SS 1-3. After the JSS education, the child gets Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and sits for West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) after his/her senior secondary education. At the University level, the child graduates after four or five years; depending on the course being pursued. It could be three years for Colleges of Education and two years for Polytechnics.

Problems of Learning in Schools

Ogbonnah (1986) highlighted the followings as some of the problems confronting Nigerian education:

(a) Inadequate Pre-school Preparation:

In Nigeria, Kindergarten and Nursery education exists only in the urban areas. It is limited to children of high socio-economic status or the high class. In rural areas, many of the parents are illiterates and their pre-school education to the children are based on domestic training, folklore and farming. In America, kindergarten can be used profitably to build readiness for formal school education: children from the educated parents have advantages at home and in nursery schools.

(b) Insufficient Learning Materials:

Instructional materials are made to enhance learning. Such materials as audio-visual aids, textbooks, maps, charts etc helps children to learn fast. Children learn more when they see more. There are no over-head projection, tape recorders to enable them view certain learning outcomes or listen to some tunes or instruction on tape. Learning in Nigeria is theoretically imparted with poor teaching methods.

(c) Lack of Interest in School Activities:

A learner is expected to show interest in all the activities of the school. However, children from low socio-economic status homes show less interest in sporting activities than children from high socio-economic status homes. Children from high socio-economic homes show interest in both academic and either activities in schools than their counterparts in low socio-economic status homes. Unfortunately, most of our teachings are quite abstract and distant from the needs and interests of the children generally.

(d) Family Background and Lack of Necessary Amenities for Learning.

People of high socio-economic status send their children to school earlier than those of low socio-economic status. They have the means and opportunities of sending their children to nursery schools which serve as transition from home to the school. In most cases, their children start formal school at the age of five rather

than six. On the other hand, the amenities that should be provided in the schools are not provided. Such amenities as furniture, blackboards, writing materials, libraries are not there. This reduces the learning abilities of children in schools.

(e) Lack of Funds:

The major problem bedeviling the growth of teaching and learning is inadequate funding. Our governments do not fund education adequately. Due to lack of funds, teachers salaries are not paid, amenities are not provided. This affects learning negatively that the children could not learn properly. The teaching aids are not provided. Other learning aids such as projects, audio-visuals etc. are not provided due to lack of funds.

(f) The Emergency of Cultism:

Secret cults have penetrated into our secondary and tertiary schools. These secret cult members intimidate fellow students. Their members assault both students and staff; thereby endangering lives and properties on campus. The cult members create a sense of fear that even the teachers are afraid of them. Cult members disrupt teaching and learning processes in our schools. This they do by disrupting social and recreational facilities. Sometimes, facilities in the school are vandalized by the cult members. This makes the students to live in fear, learning, hardly strives in such environment.

(h) Political Consideration:

Political factors are an important of Nigerian educational system. Appointments are made based on political god fatherism in the Ministry of Education. Mediocrity therefore is thrown on the altar of merit. Some teachers refuse postings especially in the villages because they have god fathers in the government. Some communities may not have schools sited in their communities because areas because they have no body in government.

Solutions/Recommendations

If the following underlisted solutions are implemented by the government, our teaching and learning would go to the next level.

(a) Both the Federal and State governments should site, fund and manage nursery/kindergarten schools. These nursery schools should be sited both in rural areas and urban areas to prepare both the children of low income earners and the children of high income earners too. It should be also compulsory. This is to enable our children to prepare very well for primary education.

(b) Provision of Facilities.

Our governments – Federal, State and Local should as a matter of necessity should provide teaching aids to all levels of our education system. Our primary and secondary schools should be well equipped with art of state facilities. Our universities and other tertiary institutions should be well equipped to meet the challenges of the society.

(c) Motivating our learners.

Our children should be motivated to learn. Their interests, should be aroused. This government can do by making schools attractive to all manner of children.

(d) Adequate Funding

Government should take funding of our schools with every sense of seriousness. There is no doubt that education is underfunded. This has led to the dearth of books, equipments, qualified teachers and non provision of other learning facilities in schools.

(e) Eradication of Cultism

Government should put appropriate measures towards eradicating cultism on our campuses. Cultism have made our students to live in fear. Some students have lost their lives for cultism. Some staff too have lost their lives too. Our education schools should be cultism – free environment where students can learn without molestation. Any student found to be a member of cult should be rusticated.

(f) Divorcing Education from Politics

Education is a very important social good. Government should therefore, not use political considerations in deciding matters related to education. Education matters should be left in the hands of education experts and managers.

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