

# Basic Education In Nigeria For Global Competitiveness: The Way Forward.

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**Abstract:** Basic Education for global competitiveness, should be the type of education that would be given to the citizenry (learners) to enable them acquire knowledge, skills, and work experience that are desirable to solve such global challenges as climate change, poverty, insecurity, ecology and economy. Unfortunately, the potentials of the basic education programme to fulfill these responsibilities is always challenged by poor funding, poor planning, inadequate infrastructure and instructional facilities. This paper therefore, tried to examine some of these challenges together with the strategies embark upon by the Federal Government of Nigeria in making Basic education globally competitive. Recommendations were made ,among which include that the Government Agencies in charge of Basic Education programme should review and include in the curriculum some elements of global challenges such as climate change, poverty, insecurity, among other things.

**Key words:** Basic education, globalization, global competitiveness,

## Introduction

Basic education as a type of educational programme in Nigeria has been widely discussed in local and international fora, on how the programme could be used to enhance the living standard of the graduates, attained the sustainable development Goals (SDGs), achieve sustainable future and make the graduate more skillful to fit into the competitive global. Basic education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), is a nine (9) year education structured into three (3) levels namely (a) primary I to 3 (lower basic) (b) primary 4 to 6 (middle basic); and Junior secondary school 1 to 3 (Known as upper basic). Nigeria basic education also include mass literacy, adult and non-formal education and nomadic education. Its initiative is an attempt to align with other nations to eradicate illiteracy globally.(Ikoro,2008). At this 21<sup>st</sup> century, education should aim at making granduants functionally productive within his or her level of academic attainment and can compete with great proficiency locally and globally. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) state that, at the end of the nine years of continuous education every child should acquire appropriate and relevant skill and values and be employable in order to contribute his or her quota to National development. If the individual can contribute to National development after completing basic education, invariably that same individual can compete globally. This implies that, the basic education in Nigeria should be driven by global competitiveness, which is the consciousness to proffer solutions to emerging global challenges.

## Concept of Globalization and Competitiveness

The idea of the world community being transformed into a global village was initiated and introduced by (Marshall 1960). Robertson (1987) sees globalization as an accelerated compression of the contemporary world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a single entity. In his own view, Jarvis (2000), asserts that in

globalization what binds nations and societies is not simply the ties of economic exchange and political agreement, but also the shared consciousness of being part of a global system. Formal education is one of the greatest instrument in the process of globalization. Therefore, it is through formal education that the consciousness of the world as a single entity or being part of the global system could be actualized. It is in view of the above that other concepts such as global competitiveness emerged. Global competitiveness according to Wikipedia (2003), is derived from economic and econometric terms, as ability and performance of a form, sub-sector or country to sell and supply goods and services in a given market, in relation to the ability and performance of other market. It implies that the ability and performance of any sector in the country must be measured, compared and in tandem with what is obtainable in other nations of the world as the best practice. On the other hand, World Economic Forum (2013), defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determines the level of production of a country. From the researchers' point of view, competitiveness could be the production of quality and superior goods and services that would be acceptable as meeting the standard and better option when compared to others. In other words, the quality of goods and services produced must be assessed under the prevailing global market force.

## Education for global competitiveness

Education for global competitiveness requires educating the citizens to become globally competent. This is because, to be globally competitive, one must be globally competent (Wikipedia, 2013). Education is fundamental to every human development and a critical factor in determining the individual and the nations potentials be it economic, political, social and human resources. Therefore education for global competitiveness should be a type of education that would impact in the citizenry (learners) the required knowledge, skills and work experiences that are globally desirable to solve socio-economic and political challenges

of nations and the world at large. Such education should conscientize the learners as global citizens on the need for interdependent on the world system and proffer solutions to the global challenges. Education for global competitiveness has caused a paradigm shift, recognizing the integration of global issues and challenges into every nation's curriculum such as climate change, poverty, security, peace and conflict resolution etc. This is to make the learners truly globally competitive. Educating the learners to become globally competitive implies educating them to become global citizens. Then, they could learn about the interdependent of the world system and believe that solutions to global challenges are attainable. They would also feel morally compel to confront global injustice and take responsible action to promote a just, peaceful and sustainable world (Wiki Educator, 2013). Global interdependent is facilitated by the use of computer system, internet and website, otherwise known as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities.

#### **Basic Education in Nigeria for Global competitiveness**

Basic education in Nigeria for global competitiveness should be reviewed to incorporate basic global issues and challenges such as eliminate change, global poverty, peace and conflict resolution, security, ecological, financial and economic problems. These are some of the problems facing the world today, and need to be taught at the basic education level to tertiary education level. It therefore requires that the teaching of such concepts should be encouraged and emphasized in the training and orientation of basic education teachers in Nigeria. These concepts should be broken down and integrated into literacy, numeracy, liberal arts and social science, core science and entrepreneurship. Teachers' guides for lesson notes and teaching methods should be provided for effective teaching. The basic education teachers should be taught to adopt participatory teaching and learning methods to create global consciousness in the learners, which will motivate and empower them (learners) to think critically and innovatively in solving the nations and global challenges. These will make them acquire global competency skills. Global competency skills are necessary so that the young people (learners) can invent a future that will appropriately and adequately addresses global challenges. Unfortunately, the potential of basic education system in Nigeria to fulfill these responsibilities is always marred by many factors such as inadequate funding, poor planning, inadequate infrastructural and instructional materials ( Labo-popoola, Belo and Attanda, 2009)

**Some major challenges of basic education in Nigeria for global competitiveness.** Some of the major challenges include: funding, planning, infrastructural development and instrumental facilities.

#### **Funding.**

Poor funding of education in Nigeria had been a reoccurring challenge to the growth of the sector. It seems that virtually all the past and the present government lack the political will to demonstrate the imperative of education in the overall development of the country, by allocating up to a minimum of 26% of the country's annual budgetary expenditure to education as

recommended by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).For instance, Eleweke in Onuigbo (2008), states that less than 11% of the national budget was allocated to education. Also the world bank (2012), published the annual budgetary allocation to education for 20 countries showing that Nigeria was at the last (20<sup>th</sup>) position with budgetary allocation of 8.4%.while Ghana took 1<sup>st</sup> position with 31.0% allocation; Cote d'ivoire 2<sup>nd</sup> with 30% and Uganda 3<sup>rd</sup> with 27.0% allocation and so on. Budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria has not been only low, but has been rapidly declining when compared to other nations. This situation is very poor because the 8.4% allocated to educate in 2012 was just about one-third of UNESCO's 26% recommended (Ikoro, 2013).

#### **Planning**

Proper planning is an essential tool for putting idea/vision in a proper track (Ikoro, 2013). He further states that, absence of proper planning will surely lead to faulty implementation of any programme or project. Lack of proper planning in Nigeria according to UNESCO (2000), is due to faulty census exercises. Census in Nigeria has been marred with massive irregularities. For instance, Nigeria Tribune Newspaper (2006), reports that enumerators were found filling and thumb printing the forms themselves, when they realized that they may not cover their areas before the end of the exercise. These unrealistic data generated has result to unrealistic projections of infrastructure, instructional materials, textbooks, essential amenities needed in the basic education system.

#### **Infrastructural development and instructional facilities.**

With the increase in the enrolment of children due to free and compulsory nature of the basic education, the few available infrastructural facilities are over stretched. The facilities are over-crowded, coupled with lack of power supply, computer and internet system. The provision of adequate classroom blocks, halls, staff administrative quarters, information and communication technology (ICT) and other facilities are dependent on the provision of adequate fund. With all these inadequacies the basic education in Nigeria will lack the potential for global competitiveness.

#### **Strategies by Federal Government of Nigeria to improve basic education for global competitiveness.**

Some of the practical measures taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria include;

#### **Increase in budgetary allocation to education in 2013.**

According to Okonjo-Iwuala (2013), Education has the highest budgetary allocation of ₦426.53 billion which is about 8.7%. This is to meet up with the demand of globalization and the millennium development goals. Commenting on the budgetary allocation to education sector, Awuize (2013), states that if actually the fund is released to the sector, it means that we have started seeing the need in getting our priorities right. Therefore emphasis should be on human capital and infrastructural development. Although the allocation to education in the

highest when compared to other sectors, yet it is far below the UNESCO's recommendation of 26% GDP.

➤ **The review of basic education curriculum.**

The basic education curriculum was prepared in 2006, began implementation in 2008, and got the first set graduated from Junior Secondary School in 2011 (Obioma, 2012). Obioma further states that, while the implementation was going on government needs to find out what has been done wrong and what has been done right. This led to the setting up of presidential task team on education for the reduction of the 9-year basic education curriculum content overload, but not affecting quality. The review was carried out in line with the best global practice, and the maximum subject in primary school and junior secondary now, is not more than 10. For instance, Lower basic (primary 1-3) will offer minimum of 7 and a maximum of 8 subjects' Middle basic (primary 4-6) will offer minimum of 8 and a maximum of 9 subjects. While Upper basic (Jss1-3) will offer a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 10 subjects (Dayo, 2012). The revised basic education curriculum will take effect from September 2013. In this revised edition, French education

will be introduced in primary, because it is the second official language in Nigeria. A working knowledge of the language will make the nation's children globally competitive according to Obioma (2012). In the same view, business education has been made compulsory for the purpose of making the pupils and students self reliant individual who can compete favourably any where they may find themselves.

➤ **Retraining of Basic Education Teachers.**

Since 2006, the Federal Government has through the National Teachers Institute (NTI) engaged in national-wide capacity building workshop for Primary and Junior Secondary School Teachers under the millennium development goals (SDGS) projects (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2011). The resource persons were drawn from the Universities and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The core subjects areas for the training include. English studies, Mathematics, Social studies, Basic sciences and Technology, Continuous assessment and Guidance and counseling. The participants were drawn from both the public Primary and Junior secondary schools

**Table 1:** Retraining distribution pattern of basic education teachers in Nigeria from 2006 to 2010.

Year	Number of teachers trained	No of Res persons	No of Centers	Periods (months)
2006	143,140	3,500	178	September
2007	no training was conducted			
2008	158,600	3,611	275	July/Aug
2009	115,415	3,210	249	Oct/Nov
2010	140,000	3,360	280	August
Total number of teachers trained: 557,115				

(Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011).

Assessing the impact of the retraining workshop for basic education teachers, FRN (2011) states that, majority of the teachers who participated in the past four years are now more competent and confident teachers who have internalized the rudiments of learners-centered approaches. It then implies that these teachers can train and produce graduates that would have the knowledge, skills and competence to creatively proffer solutions to the nation's and global challenges.

### Recommendations

In view of some of the challenges and the strategic measures taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria in making basic education global competitive, the following recommendations are made, as the way forward:

1. The Federal Government should as a matter of urgency increase the annual public expenditure on education to meet UNESCO's 26% recommendation.
2. The Government at all levels and stake holder should provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities in all the basic education schools in the country.
3. The Federal agencies in charge of basic education programme should review the curriculum to by including some elements of global challenges such as climate changes, poverty, security, peace and conflicts resolution and labour market (entrepreneur skills).

4. Government at all level should design a retraining programme for teachers to equip them with the knowledge and skill for global competitiveness.
5. Also, Teachers guide and manual for teaching-learning processes and other instructional materials/Aids should be provided by the Government.-

### Conclusion

Basic education is the foundation upon which other development rest. This is why World Education Service (2013) states that education in general is fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. It implies that the basic education should be driven by the application of knowledge through integration of some elements of global issues in the curriculum for solving global and the nation's challenges. There are stilt lots of deficiencies in the nation's basic education system. The government, Stake holders and individuals need to address there challenges because education in general and basic education in particular in this 21<sup>st</sup> century should be for global competitiveness.

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