



## Over-Schooling as Fallout on Poor Implementation of National Primary Education Curriculum.

**Anyanwu, Prisca Onyinye**  
Primary Education Dept  
Federal College of Education Zaria

### **Abstract**

*Primary education is the bedrock of educational development in any emerging economy. This is because effective implementation of national primary education curriculum will have a significant impact in addressing the social-economic needs of the Nigerian society without over-bordering the learner with irrelevant skills. Therefore, the paper seeks to evaluate the implementation of the primary education curriculum in Nigeria and its impact in the learning abilities of school pupils. The paper also seeks to establish the fact that the neglect of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria has contributed significantly to over-schooling. It then recommends that teachers should be subjected to proper orientation on how to use the national primary education curriculum as a guide towards the achievement of national educational objective.*

**Keywords:** Over-Schooling, Implementation, National Primary Education Curriculum

### **Introduction**

The late American philosopher, Allan Bloom, once described education as the movement from darkness to light! This statement has proven to be true over the years. Without education, a people are easily brainwashed; they cannot apply critical thinking skills so they easily believe what the few evil-minded 'smart' ones want them to believe; they are easily convinced to do evil and because most of them are poverty-stricken, they commit the most atrocious things for a ridiculously small amount of money. It may not be far from the truth to say that Nigeria is plagued by so many evils today due to her comatose. Early years/Primary education is the foundation so if the foundation is wrong, every other thing will be wrong. As John F. Kennedy, former US president said, 'a child mis-educated is a child lost,' so Nigeria is toying with her future. For Nigeria's Education sector to get back on track there is absolute need to pay attention to the early years and primary levels by ensuring that the pupils are not subjected to over-education.

### **Concept of Primary Education Curriculum**

However, serious violation of the provisions and guidelines of the National Policy on education are observed at the primary level, such as over-schooling of the children. Government provided a simple curriculum as a guideline for the operations at this level. This simple guideline allows the teaching of children through play. Curriculum, as explained by Umobong, Akubuiro and Idika (2012) is the official and authentic content which translates the expectations of the society into bits of knowledge, skills and attitudes



that should be transmitted to learners with a given course or programme in both formal and non-formal school setting.

There is the problem of non- uniformity of the curriculum used by different providers of primary education. The non-uniformity of the curriculum used by different schools poses a lot of problems which one of them is over-schooling, especially as government does not adequately monitor the primary school programme. Ibiam (2012), advised that as a result of the young children's learning pattern, social, emotional and cognitive development should be at the children's pace taking place through play and active method, rather than having the curriculum of a particular class or school being overloaded beyond the level of the children. Another ugly situation is that most teachers at this level of education are professionally unqualified, under-skilled, undereducated or under-schooled to actually understand the goals and purposes of this level of education as provided by the FRN (2004) in her National Policy on Education and the learning theories. Some parents and guardians support the idea that their children and wards be given more schooling to cover every aspect of the curriculum. This equally leads to over-schooling.

### **Concept of Over schooling**

The concept of over-schooling has two key words- 'over' and 'schooling'. Hornby (2006) defines 'over' as something being above or beyond while "schooling" is defined as instruction at school. For Anon (2013), schooling is defined as a formal form of education where pupils are taught subjects in a classroom based on a curriculum. Thus, over-schooling means undergoing and undertaking the act or process of being trained, being drilled, instructed, taught or educated far above or in excess of what is provided in the curriculum. However, this concept of over-schooling is not yet fully understood but it is explained in terms of over-education which is defined as the phenomenon in which individuals feel burdened or oppressed by the weight of their education (Bishop 1995). Furthermore, Leuven and Oosterbeek (2011) perceived over-schooling as the difference between a worker's attained or completed level of school and the level of schooling required for the job the worker holds. In this context, over-schooling is the overburdening, overtaking or over-tutoring of children with school-related activities which will give them no opportunity to adequately interact with their environment, especially through play. In order to be precise the paper shall discuss over-schooling in relation to children at the primary group. Dimensions of over- schooling to be considered include: staying long hours in school, volume of tasks usually given as homework, academic work involvement of children at school, influence of over-schooling on the children and the possible solutions of over-schooling (OKONKWO, 2014)

Over-schooling at the primary level of education could be stressful to the children and in fact, makes school to be stressful. An over-schooled child, according to Joshua (2012), is regarded as one who has schooled beyond the level expected of him/her, or one who has spent a number of years in excess of the number required or expected of him/her.



In fact, as a result of the overload of the curriculum of most schools at this level teachers find it very difficult to comply with curriculum guidelines and children are made to stay for a long time in school in an attempt for the school to cover the curriculum without considering the adverse effect this long stay may have on the children. Having children stay long in school does not encourage creativity which is acquired through free play. Anderson-McNamee and Bailey (2010) noted that play could be beneficial to children as it could help them to learn, to socialize, explore their immediate environment, develop an attitude of critical and reflective thinking which encourages creativity, mental and physical development and learning. Supporting this view, Okafor (2010) observed that children could be curious and this natural inclination of theirs should not be hindered but rather they should be allowed to discover facts by themselves by verifying it in an open domain of experience. Children should be allowed to be children. Umobong, Akubuiro and Idika (2012) citing Holts (2005), observed that too much schooling could work against education.

Educators too often overlook the fact that children learn more outside the classroom than in the classroom. Keeping children after the normal school period for extra lessons up to 4.00pm or 5.00pm when they will be picked by their parents at the end of their business or work may not be beneficial to the children. Unfortunately, the proprietors are more interested in the economic rather than the educational or social consideration. The profit component is pursued with much vigour to the detriment of pursuing the lofty goals highlighted at this level of education (Joshua, 2012). Over involvement of the children in academic activities at this level is also another aspect of over-schooling. As observed by Umobong, et al. (2012), when the missionaries initially introduced formal education, children enrolled in school at the age of 5 or 6 when they were considered mature enough to be able to cope with the rigors associated with school. Today the story is different as children get enrolled at the very tender age of less than 2 years. These children are made to sit down for a very long period engaging in one academic work or the other in the day without enough recreational activities. However, Benavente (2006) sees academic involvement of children as beneficial. For him, it would keep children safe and protect them from negative and unsafe behaviour outside the school. Young children also benefit especially from the social skills development and improved academic skills. But having them get over involved in academic activities is bad.

### **Review of Primary Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

The introduction of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) marked a significant development in the history of primary education. Curriculum change presents teachers, schools and boards of management with a unique opportunity to engage in professional development, improve learning outcomes, and prepare children for the challenges and opportunities of the future. The task of curriculum implementation is complex: it requires in-school management teams, principals and boards of management to lead the



implementation of change in the school as an organisation. Curriculum change takes place in the classroom and it involves teachers translating curriculum documents into practice, embracing new teaching programmes and methodologies, and providing a broader range of learning experiences for their pupils (Adeneye & Oludola,2013)

The historical antecedence of curriculum development in Nigeria began with the arrival Christian Missions in September 1842 and the establishment of missionary schools. Between 1842 and 1881 Christian Missions alone opened, maintained, controlled as well as defined the objectives, contents and instructional methods including the curriculums of those schools. The main thrust of the curriculum then was based on the four R's: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion. The objectives of mission schools and the curriculum were to train lay-readers, cooks and catechists who could assist in the mission work (Fajana, 1969; Adeyinka, 1988). The agitation by indigenous people for the opening of schools in their respective local environments led to the establishment of the Church Missionary Society Grammar School, Lagos in 1859, Methodist Girls' High School, Baptist Academy and Methodist Boys' High School. Although these schools were opened based on local demands the curriculum and subjects were controlled by the Missionaries (Ajayi, 1963; Adeyinka, 1988). Subjects taught in these Grammar – School gave little consideration to agriculture or preparation for self – employment rather pupil were trained in British literary tradition and were empowered to mount white collar jobs that were normally for the products of the grammar schools.

The early secularly curriculum development in the history of education in Nigeria was between 1882 and 1925. Government interest in curriculum development started in 1882 with the establishment of Education Act which provided for a Board of Education to regulate the development of education at all level in British West African Countries. The opening of the first Government Secondary School (King's College, Lagos in 1910 and the Metamorphosis of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate to school certificate in 1923 significantly affected the development of curriculum for senior classes of Nigerian Grammar Schools. Consequently, between 1916 and 1920, subjects such as applied mathematics, experimental science, Botany, Natural History of Animals, Needlework and Hygiene were included in the Nigerian Grammar school curriculum (Adeyinka, 1988). Phelps –Stokes Commission Report of 1925 had wide implication on curriculum development in Nigeria. The report revealed that education in Nigeria was not adapted to the needs and aspirations of the people, consequently subjects such like History, Geography, and Biology etc were restructured to focus on Nigeria and Africa in general (Lewis 1962, Adeyinka, 1988). The establishment of West African Examination Council (WAEC) in March 1952 and its Logos Office in September 1953 significantly influenced curriculum development in Nigeria. The council was saddled with the responsibility of inspecting and encouraging Grammar schools to teach subjects that are examined by WAEC. Soon after independence in 1960, the quest for national development informed



the expansion and modification of the inherited colonial curriculum to serve the new socio-economic and political needs identified in Nigeria (Woolman, 2001).

Critical intellectual evaluation of the goals and practice of education in Nigeria occasioned the establishment of Ashby Commission's whose report in 1960 led to the introduction of subjects such as Vocational Studies, Commerce and Agriculture in secondary schools (Adeyinka, 1988). This is because Mission Schools and their curriculum neglected African culture and history (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson 1996), thus separating students from the life and needs of their community (Woolman, 2001). Other landmark events that influenced curriculum development in Nigeria include the establishment of Educational Research Council, the National Curriculum Conference (NCE) in 1969. National Policy on Education in 1977 reviewed in 1981 and 2004. The proceedings of the NCC informed the National Policy on Education and the 6-3-3-4 system of Education and a comprehensive review of both the junior and secondary school curriculum. The introduction of Universal Basic Education in 1999 also brought remarkable change in class-room management techniques, supervision and curriculum development in Nigeria (Ayo & Adebisi, 2008, Ajibola, 2008).

### **Effects of Over Schooling on Learning Abilities of the Learners.**

Academic stress has been a part of learners' life at the primary level of education because of over bearing demand of the existing curriculum. Learners spend about 12 hours a day on schoolwork. The outcome had always resulted in absenteeism as a result of ill health. . This problem is basically brushed off by most people because of this mentality of, "You're doing well, so why are you complaining?" Most learners experience symptoms of stress in primary school, and suffer from panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder in school. The situation is being made worst with Parents encouraging their wards with following statements "Work harder, you're a smart kid, I know you have it in you, and if you want to go to secondary school, you need to work harder."

Mary Alvord, a clinical psychologist in Maryland and public education coordinator for the American Psychological Association, says that "A little stress is a good thing and can motivate students to be organized. But too much stress can back fire. According to a new NPR poll conducted with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health. In most cases, that stress is from academics, not social issues or bullying, the poll found. Homework was a leading cause of stress, with 24 percent of parents saying it's an issue. Chronic stress can cause a sense of panic and paralysis, Alvord says. The child feels stuck, which only adds to the feeling of stress. Some overzealous parents may also push their children to jump to the next higher class, without considering the children's readiness and ability to cope with the new task. This violates Harvighurst's developmental task theory which states that when the time is right, the ability to learn a particular task will be possible. It is as a result of this inability to cope with the task that homework is done by their parents. This amounts to over-schooling. Marzano and



Pickering (2007) observed that the issue of homework had been a perennial topic of debate in education. Attitude towards it has been cyclical and throughout the first decade of the 20th century, educators commonly believed that homework helped to create a disciplined mind, but much later, there was a growing concern that homework was interfering with other home activities. This sparked a reaction against it with some learning theorists claiming that it could be detrimental to students' mental health. Kleeneze (2013) believes that spending more time on homework adversely affects children's scores in schools and also leads to depression in children and suggests that children should be allowed 8 hours of play and 8 hours of rest (sleep) in a day.

Additionally, Kralovec and Buell (2000), Bennett and Kalish (2006), believe that much homework harm children's health and family time. It stresses parents because they will need to sit down to help their children with the homework. However, Marzon and Pickering (2007) believed that homework should not be abandoned but that the quality should be improved to match the age of the children.

### **Causes of Over-Schooling**

**Quality education:** Teachers can only give what they have. A teacher has a great influence on children, hence, the need for quality teachers. "Nigeria needs a knowledge-based and knowledge-driven economy and that can only be achieved through quality education. Many primary school pupils cannot read. We must get the right teachers and build the system to develop the teachers. A school is as good as the weakest teacher in the school. The children are Nigeria's treasures and teachers are the nurturers.

**Teacher Training:** Many Nigerian pupils are taught by untrained or inadequately trained teachers, hence the poor outcome. The poor outcomes of the education system are strongly linked to quantitative and qualitative shortcomings in Nigeria's teacher stock. According to the World Development Indicators Database (World Bank 2012), in 2010, only 66.15% of primary education teachers were properly trained. Other sources (World Bank 2008; Idoko 2010) say 57% and more than 50%, respectively, of basic education teachers are unqualified or under-qualified. Given these numbers, it seems safe to conclude that as many as one third of the current population of primary and secondary teachers are under-prepared or unprepared for their jobs. This would mean that out of Nigeria's 574,078 primary and 273,781 secondary education teachers in 2010, only about 550,000 were properly trained while about 300,000 were not. Given that other estimates classify as many as 50% of the teacher population as untrained. Primary school teachers are not adequately equipped to train the young minds. When we have a weak mind from primary go into an ill-equipped secondary school, they then struggle into the university and become what I call half-baked. Sola Okuneye, an educationist with over 30 years of experience believes that Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) should be re-introduced for Nigeria to get it right. According to him, we used to have Grades III, II and I teachers but they were phased out



and the National Certificate in Education (NCE) was made the lowest qualification to teach in primary schools as part of the National Policy on Education. Now, if you want a teacher to teach in the primary school, are you training the teacher for that? Most of the NCE teachers cannot cope in primary school because the curriculum is not tailored towards the primary school. NCE holders can only teach in secondary schools (Vanguard Newspaper October 13, 2016)

**Childhood Education:** Most of the colleges of education have their curriculum not on primary education but on secondary education and that is where the problem is. How many people have been trained in early childhood education? Many of the teachers in nursery and primary schools need to go to school. They teach not because of passion or that they are trained for it, they are teaching because there is nobody to do it.

**Remuneration:** Primary school teachers in many developed countries are well paid because they recognise the fact that it is the foundation for any development. You don't expect good fruits from the top when the root is decayed. Mrs Yinka Ogunde, CEO of Edumark Consult and founder of CPEN said Finland's educational model is the best today because they developed a model built on getting the best of their best to be teachers and pay them very well. You have to be very good to teach in their schools so why won't the outcome be good?"

**Curriculum:** According to Idu (2009), the curriculum is too vague and nobody wants to admit that the reason of having high unemployment is because of the curriculum. Teachers do not prepare pupils towards specific industries. So many things are not relevant to the industry in our curriculum. When we leave out the applied aspect of a subject, how do we expect the pupils to cope at the end of the day? The curriculum should be designed to meet national needs," Oyeleke and Akinyeye (,2013) noted there is need a working curriculum. What we have now is not workable, it is still way behind and incomplete. When it comes to Early Childhood, we need to restructure the curriculum and be able to adequately train Early Childhood teachers (Oyeleke & Akinyeye,2013)

**Government Policies:** Policy somersaults by government have been an issue in Nigeria's education sector. The 6-3-3-4 system of education introduced some years ago, is not followed to the letter. The constant change in government policies is adversely affecting outcome.

**Functional Education:** our educational system is not functional. We now have graduates that cannot write job applications. There is a need for government to overhaul the Education system. Most of our primary school pupils cannot write; they cannot spell; they are poor in literary and numeracy skills. Corroborating this assertion, Dr Ensign said that many of the children who make it into school do not receive a good basic education. According to UNESCO, in 2008, 28% of young men aged 15-29 who had left school after



six years of schooling were illiterate, and a further 39% were semi-literate. Among young women, these figures were 32% and 52%, respectively.

**Funding:** Funding is important but it is not all about money, it is more about ideas, vision, planning, strategy and implementation. We can spend billions of naira in education without achieving results. Speaking on the budget of the sector between 2011 and 2016, Mr Omole Ibukun, Secretary, Education Rights Campaign (ERC), OAU, Ile-Ife explains that From N306.3bn in 2011, to N400.15bn in 2012, to N426.53bn in 2013, to N493bn in 2014, to 492bn in 2015, to N369bn in 2016, Nigeria's most important sector remains underfunded. While this budget is for the federal level alone, it is still less than adequate for the essential development needed in this sector. With over 10m out-of-school children, Nigeria needs to expend this fund on 40 federal universities, 21 federal polytechnics, 22 federal colleges of education and 104 unity colleges.

**Shortage of Teachers:** The overwhelming need for recruiting, training and retraining is confronted with the current supply issue of around 68,000 new trained teachers a year (National Bureau of Statistics 2013). Thus, to resolve the current problem would take almost 20 years by which time the population of young Nigerians would have doubled requiring yet another doubling of teaching resources. In short, the current structure and system cannot solve the problem.

### Recommendations

1. Children should not be kept in school beyond the normal school period of 12.00 noon to 1.00pm for whatever reason. Government should ensure that defaulting schools in this regard are severely sanctioned.
2. Parents should be part of the decision making body of the school that is, being members of the school's Parent Teacher Association.
3. Seminars should be organized from time to time for parents by churches and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to educate parents on the psychological implication of over-schooling of children at the pre-primary school level.
4. The National Policy on Education should be mass produced by the Federal Government and ensure that this important book is given to parents of these children at the point of registration of their children at school.
5. Tertiary institutions, especially Universities should mount diploma or degree programme in primary education to train graduates in primary education. These will eventually be employed to teach the primary school children in both private and public primary schools. This will enable teachers to follow the simple curriculum provided by the National policy on Education which will result to lots of leverage and stress-free teaching as most teaching and learning will be done through play.



6. Government should ensure proper monitoring and supervision of the activities of both private and public schools on regular basis. They should ensure strict compliance to the provisions of the National Policy on Education. Sanctions should be made on defaulting schools, because if the purpose and guidelines provided by the National Policy on Education are implemented children would grow normally to become responsible citizens later in life.
7. Government should organize seminars for Heads of public and private pre-primary schools to harmonize their activities, and the curriculum they use. This will ensure that children are not overburdened with homework, school activities etc.
8. Teachers should teach children at this level of education using the specified guidelines in the National Policy on Education.

### References

- Adeneye O. A. Awofala & Oludola Sarah (2013). *Recent Curriculum Reforms in Primary and Secondary Schools in Nigeria in the new Millennium* Sopekan *Journal of education Practice* [www.iiste.org](http://www.iiste.org) ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online) Vol.4, No.5, 2013.
- Adeyinka, A. A. (1988). *Major Trends in Curriculum Development in Nigeria*. Online available at: <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/journals/education/ije/sept1988/MAJOR%20trends%20in%20curriculum%20Development%20in%20Nigeria.pdf>. Retrieved 2/1/11
- Ajayi, J. F. (1963). The Development of Secondary Grammar School Education in Nigeria. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2 (4), 523
- Ajayi, J. F. A., Goma, L. K.H. & Johnson, G. A. (1996). *The African Experience with Higher Education*. London James Carrey.
- Anderson-McNamee, J. K., & Bailey, S. J. (2010). Importance of play in early childhood development. Retrieved from <http://www.msxtensio.org/publications/Healthandfamily/MT201003HR.pdf> . retrived on 30/6/13.
- Anon (2013b). What is the difference between education and schooling? Retrieved from <https://site.google.com/site/edu-visntel-2013-6/> on June, 2013.
- Benavente, J. (2006). After school activities can change a child's life. Retrieved from [www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/nutr\\_related.html](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/nutr_related.html) on 7/3/2013.
- Benneth, S. & Kalish, N. (2006). *The case against homework: How homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it*. New York: Crown.



- Bishop, J. (1995). Improving Job – Worker Matching in the US labor market: what is the role of employment service? In T. Husen and T.N Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd ed.(7) 1995(pp.4249-4255). Great Britain: BPC Wheatons Ltd.
- FRN (2004). *National Policy on Education*. NERDC, Lagos.
- Emeh, J. U, Isangadighi, A. J. Patrick A. P. Agba K. & Ogaboh, A. M. (2011). Curriculum Review: Reactions from Education Stakeholders in South-South States of Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 11 (2) 44-59 International Research Journal Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA).
- Joshua, M. T. (2012). *Overschooling: Concept and Reflections on Nigeria Context*. *Journal of Education* , 5, 9- 26.
- Ibiam, J. (2012). Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood Care and Education. In Q.I. Obinaju, and J. Ibiam (Eds.), *Early Child Care and Education for Universities and Colleges of Education* (pp 266-287). Uyo: Soulmate Press.
- Kralovec, E., & Buell, J. (2000). *The end of homework: How homework disrupts families, overburdens children, and limits learning* . Boston: Beacon.
- Kleeneze, (2013). Too much homework can cause stress, depression and lower grades. Retrieved from [www.factualfacts.com/science-facts/too-much-homework-can-cause-stress-depression-and-lower-grades-studies-suggest/htm](http://www.factualfacts.com/science-facts/too-much-homework-can-cause-stress-depression-and-lower-grades-studies-suggest/htm) on 29/6/13.
- Leuven, E., & Oosterbeek, H. (2011). Over-education and Mismatch in the Labour Market. Research Report- IZA Discussion Paper No 5523. Retrieved from [www.econstor.eu/./664646352.pdf](http://www.econstor.eu/./664646352.pdf). on 3/2/11
- Lewis, L. J. (1962). *Phelps-Stokes Report on Education in Africa*. London: OUP
- Marzano, R.J.,& Pickering, D.J. (2007). Special topic/the case of “for and against homework”. Retrieved from [www.marzanoresearch.com/document/GSASR\\_Homeworkarticle.pdf](http://www.marzanoresearch.com/document/GSASR_Homeworkarticle.pdf) on 30/6/13.
- Okafor, F.C. (2010). *Philosophy of Education and Third World Perspective*. Port Harcourt: Odomezie Kris and Company.
- Okonkwo, S. C. (2014) Perception of parents on over- schooling of children at the pre-primary education in Onitsha. A project submitted to the department of education foundations, faculty of education, university of Nigeria, Nsukka .



Oyeleke, O. & Akinyeye, C.O (2013). *Curriculum Development in Nigeria; Historical Perspectives Centre for Distance Learning, Journal of Educational and Social Research Vol. 3 (1) ISSN 2239-978X.*

Umobong, M.E., Akubuiro, I.M., & Idika, D.O.(2012).Parents' perception of over-schooling at the pre-primary education. *Journal of Education, 5 , 59-70.*

Vanguard Newspaper (October 13, 2016) "Nigeria's Education sector can be great again if...".

Woolman, D. C. (2001). *Educational Reconstruction and Post Colonial Curriculum Development: A Comparative Study of Four African Countries. International Educational Journal, 2 (5), 27-46.*