

CHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: HINDRANCES AND LEGAL SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Nigerian children are facing problems in their educational career due to their parents' inability to take care for them because of their separation as husband and wife, and the ineffectiveness of Nigerian government. The major hindrance that is obstructing child education in Nigeria is uncontrollable corruption that is rampant among Nigerian leaders. This is strongly affecting the standard of education across the nation.

Therefore, this paper examined and discussed the legal provisions provided for a child to have access to education under Nigerian Laws and causes of educational hindrances in Nigeria. The standard of education in Nigeria, facilities, and quality of teachers were also examined in the paper. The study applied quantitative method.

The paper was concluded by enunciating useful suggestions as solution to the child education hindrance in Nigeria in the best interest of children and the nation at large.

Keywords: Child, Child Education, Legality of Child's Education and Hindrance

Introduction

It is the parents duty to educate their children by giving them sound and useful education which is better than acquiring property and estates that usually cause a rift after the parents' death. Many parents are conscious of their children's education and they pay more attention to their children's education while some are not really concerned at all about their children's education. Since no one deny the utility and importance of knowledge as a gateway to success in life, it is obligatory for parents to give a sound and useful education to their children which are their foremost responsibility.

Imparting sound education, good health, ethics, and morals will definitely produce the prosperous nation of tomorrow and the new generation. In school, children's character and behaviour should be examined and watched carefully and vigilantly by their respective teachers and lecturers. All bad characteristics, idiosyncrasies, attitudes, and wild behaviour that are not promptly corrected and changed from childhood will reflect on the nation in the future because the children of today are future of the nation (Iqbal 1974).

Legality of Child's Education in Nigeria

The following provisions provide the legal rights for a child to have access to education under the Nigerian law. Section 15 of the Nigerian Child Act 2003 provides that a child has the right to free, compulsory, and universal basic education and the parents should ensure that their children attend primary and junior secondary school as stated in the Act. It further states that any parent who fails to send their children to school would be reprimanded for the first conviction while the amount of N2000 or one month imprisonment would be imposed for a second conviction.

The amount of N 5000 or two months imprisonment or both is prescribed as punishment for subsequent convictions (Federal 2003). There is a large body of evidence from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* about seeking knowledge from childhood to adulthood, from one place to another and from one country to another country to indicate the importance of knowledge and the differences between the ignorant and literate people in the community and society together (Surat Al-Alaq 1-5). The mentioned verses indicate the importance of knowledge and one cannot be well educated unless one struggles for it. The strategy to be educated is to pursue knowledge anywhere and anytime. So, parents should be well prepared to educate their children as educating them is a way of preparing them for their future responsibilities and also giving them power to get their rights in a legal way.

Therefore parents should train their children on basic education for that will help them to discover new things in the near future. Furthermore on legality of child's education, section 15 subsection 1-7 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Child's Rights Act, 2003 provides for the child's right to free and compulsory and universal primary, secondary, and university education. Similarly, section 15, subsection 5 also makes provision for pregnant children before completing their education to be given another chance to complete their education while section 15 subsection 4 spells out that a child should be sent to an appropriate trade after the completion of primary school provided that the child is not capable of continuing his or her education (Federal 2003). The above provision for the child's right to education is in line with the *shari'ah* and guaranteed under various statues in some Muslim nations and globally, but the practice in Nigeria is totally different and contrary to the provision due to the government's ineffectiveness. Due to discrimination between boys and girls, many Nigerian girls achieve lower levels of education and, for that reason; many enter into business, trade, and also early marriage (Cardozo 2006).

The girls are not well educated, missing the opportunity to enhance their income, they will not be able to contribute to the family financially. In case of any disaster such as death of husband where the wife does not work or is not allowed to engage in doing any work, both the wife and her children will suffer especially if the estate

which is left is insufficient for the children and the wife. In such a situation, children of such a family would find themselves in the labour force that will negatively impact on their entire lives (Federico 2008). This will give children basic education and skills that will create a better chance for the educated ones to be useful in the labour market. This will also reduce child exploitation among employees while educational opportunities for children play a tremendous role in reducing the number of children working in hazardous and unhealthy conditions in the country (Nelien 2000).

Without sincerity, nothing can be achieved and materialized, so the culture of sincerity should be re-inculcated into the minds of children and this will make them love their country and when they love their country most, they will think and plan good things for the country.

A member of the National Assembly in the short – lived third Republic, Senator Francis Spanner Okpozo, lambasted Nigeria leaders for their insincerity with people even as he asserted that the country's situation was utterly hopeless (Tony 2008). In order to pay and give more attention to standard of education in Nigeria, the educational programme structure, the content of the curriculum and syllabus, teaching approaches and methods applied in the schools should include relevant, useful knowledge and skills that will prepare children to be more responsible adults in the future. This programme will help them to engage in decent work with reasonable wages that will be sufficient for their immediate family (Nelien 2000).

Government's Role to Formalize Child's Education in Nigeria

It has been explained in the previously that education plays an important role in human life. Therefore, it is the Nigerian government's duty and responsibility to formalize the education system in Nigeria, Starting from primary school up to the university level.

The Nigerian government documented unprecedented growth at all levels of education between 1976 and 1980 at the primary, secondary, and university levels (Onyeonoru 2007; fyfe and Jankanish 1997; Egbokhare 2007). The present situation of education in Nigeria is far detached and cannot be compared with the situation in 1976 to 1980. So, the education system should be made free to all children from primary to junior secondary school regardless of their status and financial capacity. If the Ministry of Education removes all their defects by providing free educational opportunities for rural and urban areas, adequately trained teachers, facilities, and free food for the needy and free stationary for poor students, sound and standard of education will be impacted on the citizens for the best interests of the children and the nation at large. If the government could fully implement those methods of child education, it would attract and retain children in schools (Nelien 2000). Pre- school education should be strengthened by the Federal and State Ministry of Education in Nigeria, in particular, to incorporate drop out children and working children into schools. The project will give more enthusiasm for an interest in school among working children, their parents, and teachers. It is the government's duty to provide early free childhood education and

children should be taught about their rights and duties to themselves and the nation throughout their curriculum and syllabus (Fafunwa 2002). This project and programmes could not materialize in Nigeria unless those who are in charge of education at the state and national levels are well disciplined, honest, and committed, because sincerity is lacking in the nation (Akinkugbe 1994). So, the government should appoint someone who possesses the qualities to hold the post of Minister of Education and Commissioner of Education at the Federal and State Levels to ensure that all children of school age are in Nigeria public schools.

Hindrances of Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the children collectively encounter educational problems because of inadequate and insufficient materials and lack of sound educational planning nationally. Nigeria is a country where intelligent people across the nation can make drastic changes in child education, but are not given the opportunity to do so. However, many educated Nigerians are teaching and working in other countries around the world. But her citizens are still suffering from lack of basic and adequate physical and instructional facilities. Some times teachers and lecturers, went on strike which greatly affected the life of many students across the nation. The reason is that the strike subjects the students to spend more than reasonable and rational years for the registered program. Also Lack of adequate and sufficient facilities is another obstacle obstructing and confronting students in Nigeria such as enough accommodation, class room and lecture room, and modern technology and well equipped laboratory for the students. Poverty and lack of seriousness of students also contribute to the hindrances of Education, while the major problem is the rate of corruption in the Ministry of Education that has great negative impact on the entire education system across the nation (Fafunwa 2002; Sutuyan 2006).

The current and past Ministers of Education in Nigeria called for a reform of the Nigerian education system because without reformation, the MDGs and EFA desired goals cannot be achieved (Sufuyan 2006). The standard of Nigerian Education needs an urgent and quick response and approach from the government to update its educational system and curriculum. Their teachers must be well trained and up-dated in modern technology.

Teaching facilities and amenities which are currently insufficient should be supplied and security provided and made available for both teachers and students. Because of insufficient facilities and amenities, Nigerian public schools are no longer an option for rich parents who are able to enroll their children in foreign schools abroad. If the Nigerian government made education more attractive, compulsory, and improved the quality for poor children and their families by way of providing free education, the rate of child labour would be sharply and significantly reduce in Nigeria. There are many other ways in which Nigeria education can be reshaped and restructured in the best interests of children and the nation at large. Since the Nigerian government is the major contributor in financing education, it should give more fund for quality education in the nation. The cost of private schools is high and out of reach for the majority of Nigerian parents. Trained teachers, adequate classrooms, stationery, and reasonable salaries for the teachers

are the main input the government is expected to provide but none of these are properly handled by the Ministry of Education. There are not enough trained teachers in rural and urban areas which has a great impact on Nigerian education. Also, teacher's salaries are very poor which makes them to go on strike all the time while many classes are so congested due to insufficient buildings to accommodate the students. Therefore to avoid school drop outs, all these need should be provided for by the Nigerian government to enable children have sound education (Fafunwa 2002; Data 2008).

The percentage of children in both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria is falling by the year due to the internal and external forces that deprive many children of a quality education and being committed to their studies. From recent investigation, it is found that many children are not serious about their education and most of them are not even registered in primary and secondary schools due to the unavoidable circumstances across the nation. As the Minister of Education noticed in some attempt to solve the persistent causes and problems of children shunning school, the execution of the project should be properly and judiciously monitored by the ministry if they really want a solution in the interest of the children and the nation (Data 2008).

Legal Solutions

Due to the high rate of corruption in Nigeria and its grave impact towards the education, deterrent punishment from all Nigerian legal system should be implemented on the corrupt leader, official, staff, and other in other to curb and control corruption that is rocking the education system in Nigeria in the interest of children and nation at large.

Suggestions

The following can be suggested for the reshaping, and recapping of the standard of Nigeria education in the interest of Nigerian children and nation at large. It is discovered that school maintenance is beyond the individual capacity. So, it is only the government which can provide free fair and standard education with all educational facilities and good salaries that will attract and create a good standard of education in the nation. The simple fact is that private schools are too costly for many Nigerian parents to afford. As a result of that, many children lack the opportunity to have sound education due to the financial constraints of their parents and poor standard of public schools across the nation. Similarly, None Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and some external Aid Agencies can also play commendable and useful roles in reshaping education in Nigeria and raising it to normal standards. The question is the extent of capacity and capability of the NGOs to reach the state of equilibrium that will restructure the educational situation in the country (Bray 1999). As a matter of fact, with the huge population of Nigerian children, the NGOs do not have the capacity to provide for all children's educational needs unless the government is committed and dedicated to fulfill its fundamental responsibilities by making funds available. NGOs should also avoid tribalism and religious sentiment in their activities. They should not favour one tribe or religion against another faith in their activities otherwise they will truncate their main

objective and purpose which is paving the way for sound child education. In addition, mosques and churches can also contribute indirectly, directly by way of raising funds to purchase stationery for school children (Bray 1999).

Obviously, it is not only households and communities that should be the contributors for the construction of school buildings and purchasing stationery but due to the current situation that Nigeria children are experiencing, the household, communities, philanthropists and ecclesiastical bodies should all get involved to save children from darkness and ignorance. Their participation in uplifting the education system can also be likened to their involvement in security and family protection activities as vigilantes. If they could do that for their property and life, they can also get involved in making quality education accessible and possible for children.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is urgent and quick need for government and individual to fight all the hindrances that are confronting Nigeria educational system for the benefit of Nigeria children. The rate of corruption, strike, lack of seriousness, illegalities, and irregularities that dominate Nigerian Ministry of Education must be legally looked into and the officials and staffs found culpable to be punished to serve as lesson and deterrent to others.

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