

**NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

A white outline map of Nigeria is centered on the cover. The text 'NJSWE' is written in large, bold, white letters with a green outline across the map. Below it, 'UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN' is written in bold, red letters.

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VOL.11, ISSN 1119-28 IX
JUNE, 2012

**NIGERIAN JOURNAL
OF
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

VOL. 11 ISSN 1119-28 IX

June, 2012

Published by:

Department of Social Work

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

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The journal is published once yearly in June.

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Editorial

The articles assembled in the current edition of Nigerian Journal of Social Work Education (NJSWE) reflect the profound dynamism of the journal. As I glide through the assembled papers, I should commend the various authors who painstakingly put up the good papers.

In the first paper, Dr. Titilola Adedoyin Adebowale investigated the influence of other probable factors on emotional and psychological trauma in the youths due to unemployment. He recommended that Government and all stakeholders need to come to the aid of the generality of the youth to alleviate the consequence of unemployment on their behaviour regardless of their age, gender and duration of unemployment. Idowu Olakunle reported academic achievement of colleges of education students in South West, Nigeria. The author recommended the need for availability of human, material and financial resources in colleges of education.

In the next paper, Dr. Stella Oladeji took a look at the application of McGregor's X and Y Theories on adult and non-formal education participation. Dr. Oladeji made a case for the theories with a view to enhancing quality of adult education in Nigeria. In another paper, Irinoye, Osezua, Ikuteyijo, Agunbiade and Olasanmi reviewed some articles on social mobilization and advocacy for healthcare. These authors did a compendium analysis of twenty-five articles on the subject between the year 2006 and 2012. They concluded that there was improvement in health practices as reported by literature reviewed.

Dr. Olusegun Egunjobi in his paper investigated students' perception of social networking devices, using social networking-efficacy, knowledge and utilization as measures. The summary of his findings was that the investigated measures could predict students' perception of social networking. In his article on parenting and family types, peer influence, self-esteem, and socio-economic status on adolescents' delinquent behaviour, Dr. Rotimi Animashaun reported that the investigated variables contributed to the criterion measured. He canvassed for an enabling environment to stem the rise of delinquency among adolescents.

In the next paper, Dr. J.O Odelola discussed the concepts of the child and right with a view to promoting access to health care. He noted that through awareness and enlightenment, this could be promoted. The explicitly of articles published in the current edition of NJSWE is also explained in the papers of Drs. Medina Momoh and Olatunde Adebayo Akinsanya and Temisan Ige and Olugbose, O.M. In Momoh and Akinsanya's paper, the issue of industrial action was discussed. The fulcrum of the paper is to promote industrial harmony in state universities, while Ige and Olugbose in their papers, investigated teachers' knowledge and attitude to the use of the Internet in science. The paper represents a very good contribution in the use of internet teaching. It is a developmental tool in pedagogy in this part of the world. The two papers were well conceptualized and reported. The last paper was family environmental factors and sex education as measures of adolescents' sexual risky behaviour. Prof. S.O Salami and Josephine O. Saliu, in the paper, scientifically articulated their findings and recommended that parents should endeavour to set good examples for their children. It is indeed most fitting to have the paper published.

In sum, the echoes of the published articles would resonate for a long time. I thank the Editorial Board for the honour.

Prof. Oyesoji Aremu, cf., jp
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University of Ibadan.

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RE-INVIGORATING NIGERIAN CHILDREN: A CONSIDERATION OF RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION INCLUDING ATTENDANT RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract

Child rights have been stated in the reports of conventions, charters and conferences but the responsibilities of their implementation have not been properly articulated. Therefore, the spate of incidences of child abuse is unacceptably high. The Nigerian children continue to suffer neglect. The paper discussed concept of child and its rights. It also examined access of Nigerian child to health care and education. Also, the paper stressed the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in ensuring the right of children to health care and education. The awareness of child's right is better created through public enlightenment programme and the teaching of human right education in schools.

Keywords: Re-Invigorating, Child's right, Health care, Education, Responsibilities.

Introduction

The continued existence of a particular society depends on the survival of children. A child is the product of reproductive process. In the world over, procreation remains the medium through which belief, culture and technology are passed from one generation to another. Children are revolving reservoir from which the nation draws her manpower for economic, political and social development. In African setting, a child is an investment that parents depend on for care at old age.

A child is defined by Hornby (2005) as a young person who is not yet an adult. Ohuruogo and Ohuruogo (2003) described a child as an active and contributing member

of a family, community and society whose unalienable rights must be promoted, respected and protected. Taiwo (2007) described right as that which a person has, a just and valid claim whether it be a land, a thing or be a privilege or action. Re- invigoration is used to mean renewed strength for improved performance in a given task.

Health and education are necessary for the total development of a child. Relationship exists between education and health. For an individual to be educated, he/she must first be healthy. It is universally accepted that education is the bedrock for the development of any nation. Children are the future adults of any country. It follows then that for a nation to achieve sustainable

development, it must ensure the right of the child to education. Only healthy people can contribute meaningfully to the development of a nation.

A country's level of development is determined by the quality of its human resources. Children are the nation's enduring resources. Nigerian children have been deprived of the right to food, health and basic services. According to National Population Commission (NPC) & ICF Macro (2009), 41% of children are stunted or too short for their age, also 23% of Nigerian children are underweight and too thin for their age. Infant mortality (between birth and first birthday) stood at 75/1000 (NPC & ICF Macro, 2009). The result of weakened Primary Health Care Programme is infection of children with malaria, diarrhea, measles which cause high childhood morbidity and mortality. Growing children suffer malnutrition. Severe undernourishment with lack of protein and calories as well as macronutrient can have permanent adverse effect on growth and intellectual development of a child. In Nigeria, less than half of the population of children have access to safe water (42.8%) and about a quarter have no access to adequate sanitation (NPC, 2004).

Many children who are supposed to be in school are not in school due to ignorance and poverty. According to NPC & ICF Macro (2004), 30% of 6-11 years children are not in school while less than 20% of children age 0-5years are attending any form of organized child care programme or pre-schools. According to United Nations Agency for International Development (UNAID) 1.8 million children are orphaned by AIDS in Nigeria and majority of them lack education (FME, 2007). Nigerian

children lack access to portable water, healthy environment, recreational facilities and good communication system. The environments in our schools are not child-friendly while children suffer various forms of neglect in the society.

The United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by over 178 countries including Nigeria on 2nd September, 1990 at the UN General Assembly in New York (United Nations Children's Fund, 2000). It recognized that children have the right to basic health and education. Nigerian children cannot be said to have access to this right as they suffer one form of abuse or the other. The result of this is a collection of mal-adjusted children in the society who cannot be trusted with the future of a nation. This bleak situation in Nigeria informed the need to re-invigorate the Nigerian children through health care and education.

Concept of a Child

A child has been defined differently according to culture, belief and society. Akinbola (2007) noted that in some southern parts of Nigeria, child means a boy or girl at any age between infancy and adolescence. The United Nation Convention and Organization of African Unity chapter on the right of the child defined a child as every human below the age of eighteen years. The Child Rights Act of 2003 also defined a child as a person below the age of 18 years (FRN, 2003).

There may not be an agreed definition for a child, especially, when age is used as parameter. This is because not only that age varies depending on cultural background, also the federal structure provides for different interpretation of law along regional and authority.

Rights of a Child

A right is a natural entitlement of an individual. It is that which a person needs to function effectively in a given society. Right is the universal moral entitlement or the basic human needs which every human being ought to have been accorded or ought to have enjoyed under the law of his or her country irrespective of race, colour, creed, gender, social status or country of origin. Makinde in Bamgbose (2004) said that in most times, legal backing is necessary to ensure that an individual in the society enjoys rights.

Children depend on their parents for survival. Although children anywhere in the world are vulnerable, African children are at a higher risk of disease, deprivation and abuse more than those in the developed countries of the world. There is the need to improve the quality of life of children in the world, enhance their dignity and protect their rights. This perhaps informed the adoption of General Assembly of the United Nations Convention, the right of the child" in 1989. As a follow up to the convention, Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U) now African Union at the Head of States Summit in Addis Ababa in 1990 adopted a chapter on the rights and welfare of African Child. The Child Development Department (2001) identified the following principles of child right arising from the convention;

1. Every child has the right to life and be allowed to survive and develop.
2. Every child is entitled to a name, family and nationality.
3. Every child is free to belong to any association or assembly according to the law.
4. Every child has the right to express opinions and freely communicate them

on any issues subject to restriction under the law.

5. Every child is entitled to protection from any act that interferes with his or her privacy, honour and reputation.
6. Every child is entitled to adequate rest, recreation (leisure and play) according to his or her age and culture.
7. Every child (male and female) is entitled to receive compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education depending on individual ability.
8. Every child is entitled to good health, protection from illness and proper medical attention for survival, personal growth and development.
9. Every child must be protected from indecent and inhuman treatment through sexual exploitation, drug abuse, child labour, torture, maltreatment and neglect.
10. No child should suffer any discrimination irrespective of ethnic, origin, birth, colour, sex, language, religion, political and social beliefs, status or disability.

The Nigerian Child's Right Act of 2005 provides the following rights for children:

- i. Right to health and health service.
- ii. Right of a child to free, compulsory and Universal Primary Education.
- iii. Protection against bullying, selling, begging and prostitution.
- iv. Right to dignity of the child.
- v. Right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities.
- vi. Right to protection against sexual abuses.
- vii. Protection against child labour.

Access of Nigerian Children to Health Care

Every child is entitled to enjoy good health, protection from diseases and proper medical care for survival, personal growth and development (UNICEF, 2001). In realization of this, right to good health care of children was enshrined in many United Nations declarations. Nigeria children cannot be said to be enjoying good health as they are often exposed to higher levels of environmental contamination in the air, water, soil and foods.

Nutritional status is an important part of general health which in turn depends on food intake. In most times, foods are prepared with unsafe water, under unhygienic condition. Also, food that lacks adequate diet is fed to children due to ignorance and poverty. Such foods can cause malnutrition in children. It should, however, be realized that malnutrition can make children more vulnerable to diseases. Children often sustain injuries due to road traffic accident, use of bad sporting equipment, faulty electrical appliance and collapse of building. In this way, children suffer larger share of environmental problems in our society.

In Nigeria, infant mortality rate is 98/1000 (NPC & ICF Macro, 2009). Kayode, Owoaje and Omotade (2007) identified factors that contributed to the high rate as high fertility, harmful child rearing practices, food taboos such as avoidance of meat and fish or other food items and unhealthy delivery practices. Osinusi (2007) while reviewing the study of Kirkwood, Grove, Roger and Lob-Levt, identified diarrhea, malaria, respiratory infections and malnutrition to have contributed about 60% of the environmental burden of disease in

children less than 14 years. Most diseases causing high mortality in children are preventable and treatable but until the problem of poor health facilities are addressed, the ugly trend may continue.

Access of Nigerian Children to Education

Education is the foundation of development. A good education awakes the latent talent in every child and stimulates his or her development to the maximum level. The purpose of education is to prepare the child for a responsible life in the society. In this way, education gives skills to children to cope with life as an adult outside home so that they can be productive members of the society.

The right of a child to education has been stressed in charter, conventions, declarations and Nigerian constitution. Bamigbose (2004) lent credence to this assertion when he said that the right of children to education is guaranteed in the convention on the Rights of The Child (CRC) Article II, the Universal Declaration Human Right (UDHR) Article 26, The International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 13, International Convention on Civil and Political Right (ICCPR) and African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) Article 17.

In Nigeria, budgetary allocation to education is poor. United Nations recommended 26% of annual budget to education for developing countries of which Nigeria is one, but the highest the country has allocated is 13%. Consequently, there are inadequate teachers; also materials and resources for teaching are lacking. This is in addition to poor physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and sports field.

Public schools are unable to accommodate all children who may want to go to school. Limited economic resources of parents make them not able to afford high fees being charged by private schools where adequate learning facilities seem to be available.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The future of a child must be made bright through the provision of health care services and education. This is when children can be future prime movers of social, economic and political development of a country. The possibility of a child being a responsible member of a society depends on how effective the people who are concerned with child's development play their roles. In other words, the identified stakeholders are saddled with certain responsibilities which include the following:

i. Government and its Responsibilities

The reports of various conventions have identified the rights of a child. Government is regarded as state party having signed in agreement to the resolutions emanating from such convention or conference. It is the responsibility of the government to implement the resolution to which it is a signatory. The United Nation General Assembly Document A/RES/44/25 spelt out the specific responsibilities of the government on right of children to health care and education in articles 24 & 28.

Article 24 states that:

1. States parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is

deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

- (a) to diminish infant and child mortality;
 - (b) to ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of Primary Health Care;
 - (c) to combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking – water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;
 - (d) to ensure appropriate pre-natal health care for mothers;
 - (e) to ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast – feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents and
 - (f) to develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.
2. States parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

Articles 28 states that:

- i. States parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- (b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- (c) make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- (d) make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children and
- (e) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matter relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular attention shall be paid to the needs of developing countries.

The government has the responsibility to enact laws to enforce the rights of children. Government should also take the responsibility of disseminating information on relevant policy to the general public.

ii. The Family and its Responsibilities

The family is a group of people affiliated by blood, marriage or adoption. It forms the smallest unit of a society. It trains individual to become responsible member of the society. In this way, the family is the first teacher of the child in an informal setting. It shapes a child's identity and basic personality traits. The family as the first agent of socialization enhances growth and development of the child.

Specifically, the UN Convention on the right of the child adopted by the General Assembly on the 20th November, 1989 identified the following responsibilities for parents. (The Child Development Department, 2001):

- send children to approved schools at the appropriate ages and ensure they complete their education.
- complement school education with proper up-bringing, moral training and positive traditional values.
- facilitate technical and skills acquisition for children who drop out of school.
- encourage children to continue their education towards a career objective.
- Ensure that the child is given all necessary immunizations.
- Ensure adequate check up and medical attention to children to prevent disability and death.
- Give children nutritious food and clean water to prevent infections.
- Avoid traditional practices which are harmful to the health of the child e.g. tribal mark, female circumcisions.

The parents have the moral obligation to enhance health care and education of their children in order to make

them responsible in the society. Relevant section of law also imposes responsibilities and duties of children on parents. For example Bamigbose (2004) stated that section 301 of the criminal code 1990 impose a duty on every person who as a head of the family has charge of any member of his household who is under the age of 14 years to provide the necessaries of life for such a person.

iii The School and Its Responsibilities.

The school is a place where teaching and learning takes place. The school provides resources that make the process of learning conducive. The teacher, curriculum and materials should be appropriately and adequately provided for effective learning to take place. The school should provide an environment which is health promoting. The school has the obligation to teach the child basic principles of health and also provide environment for the good health practices. The school equips a child with life skills as well as knowledge of his/her rights and privileges in the country. In fact, it is the responsibility of the school to ensure all-round development of a child.

iv Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and their responsibilities.

Non-governmental organization is a privately created organization, the administration of which is without government interference. It is an outfit meant to complement government effort to solve particular societal problems. Non-governmental Organisations are private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide social services or undertake community development. Childhood disease,

malnutrition, child abuse and poor access to education are among myriads of problems facing children, especially in developing countries. The role of NGOs is to complement government efforts in finding solution to the identified problems. NGO as an important stakeholder in issues concerning the child has certain responsibilities.

The NGOs must be in the fore front of child's right advocacy. They must cooperate with relevant Government Agencies to stop child abuse in the society. Efforts could be made by NGO in helping indigent children to have access to qualitative education. Also, better health care could be made accessible to the children, most especially at the critical time of need. It can do these by bearing the cost, given the fact that most parents are poor.

The NGO should educate the public about the problem of child abuse by organizing conferences, seminar and symposia. The awareness so created would encourage people to co-operate with the government to ensure health care and education of the children.

v The Children and Their Responsibilities

Biologically, a child is anyone between birth and puberty or in the developmental stage of childhood between infancy and adulthood. The idea in the child is still fluid, therefore, he/she is amenable to change. Serious decision cannot be made by the person at this stage; therefore, he/she must be under the tutelage of a responsible adult.

The child should submit himself or herself to direction of responsible adults. The child should ask questions where instructions are not clear and carry out

assignment as directed. The child should observe rules of hygiene. Personal cleanliness and participation in environmental sanitation are parts of the responsibilities of a child. The child should endeavour to utilize health care services made available by government. The child should never go near all drugs kept out of reach of children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The future of Nigerian Child must be bright if the country is to attain her desired level of development. Presently, the Nigerian children are too weak to be entrusted with the future political, economic and social power of this country. This is because they are neither healthy nor knowledgeable. In order to re-invigorate the children for effective participation in the development of the country, the following measures must be taken.

1. The teaching of human right education in schools must be enforced;
2. Relevant government agencies must enforce the observation of the rights of children in the country;
3. Public enlightenment programme in form of conferences, symposia, seminars and campaigns on the rights of a child must be organized by Government and Non-Government Organisations;
4. Health promoting school environment must be ensured by relevant government agencies;.
5. Provision must be made for adequate health equipment and facilities including supplies in our health institutions;

6. the problem of poverty must be realistically tackled in the country so that parents could be able to provide for the needs of their children without resorting to child labour;
7. There should be provision of recreational centres where children will be able to make social contacts with one another. This will provide avenue where the children can be able to exchange views on issues bothering on their welfare;
8. There should be provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities which should include school buildings, equipment and instructional materials. Also, adequate supervision and monitoring of school facilities and activities must be given and
9. A well organized Parent Teacher Association which could provide needed cooperation between the school and parents should be established in schools. This programme is necessary to facilitate child health care and basic education provision as well as total development of a child.

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