

EXCELLENT CHILD EDUCATION: PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION AND SUCCESSFUL ADULTHOOD

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Abstract

This paper “Excellent Child Education: Prerequisite for Effective Education and Successful Adulthood” identified education as one of man's most potent and enduring resources for development; and excellent child education as a balanced education in which the child receives all round development, which invariably harmonizes personality crisis. It discussed six domains of excellent child education and identified the parents, the immediate family members and the teachers as the significant persons to achieve them. It further discussed eight different stages of human development and the changes associated with them. Emphasis were laid on the effects of investing on child education. Since early investment in education produces highly-skilled personnel and highly educated individuals, the paper made recommendations on the steps to achieve a functional and successful adulthood based on excellent child education.

Keywords: Excellent Child Education, Prerequisite, Effective Education, Successful Adulthood

Introduction

There is solid scientific evidence that access and exposure to quality learning opportunities early in life support the development of foundational skills needed not only for school readiness and success in primary school but also for flourishing throughout life (Tombowu, 2023; Ololade et al. 2024; Suna and Ozer, 2024; McCallops, Karpyn, Klein, & Jelenewicz, 2021, CRESP, 2024). Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is the most transformative investment a country can make to give all children a fair start in life and combat inequalities early on. A good architectural building starts from its solid foundation. According to Heckman and Masterov (2007) and Ololade et al. (2024), skill begets skill, learning begets learning. Education is the right of every child both physically fit and challenged. This assertion is derived from the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of

Human Rights; the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004, and the Universal Basic Education (UBE). At the World Summit in 2001, the Secretary General of the United Nations emphasized on the world's commitment to ensuring that every child has a right to the best possible start in life (UNESCO's Education for All Framework, 2015). Good quality education creates opportunity for developing the child's full potentials, and an enabling environment to make positive contribution to the society in meaningful ways as thematic areas (Global Partnership for Education (GPE), 2022)).

All the same, the issue of excellence for every child is shown in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) in its article (24). It recognized the right of persons with disabilities to education, with a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity (United Nations, 2015). Excellence in childhood education cannot be over emphasized. Education is one of man's most potent and enduring resources for development. Whether formal, non-formal or informal education, it is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes his potentialities and uses them for self-actualization and fulfillment in the later part of life which is adult stage (UNESCO, 2024).

According to Chanda and Priya (2024), the experience which the child gains early in life affects him/her negatively or positively. This fact lends credence to the importance of exposing the child to education early in life, in order to imbibe

the norms and values of the society which otherwise leads to manifestation of unacceptable behaviours in the lives of the individuals not guided properly. Excellent child education involves balanced education. In essence, the child receives all round development, which invariably harmonizes personality crisis. Devangana (2024), listed the following as some of the developmental domains:

- a) **Mental/Intellectual/Cognitive Development:** This involves how children think and reason.
- b) **Moral Development:** This is concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviours.
- c) **Social Development:** This refers to the ability to socialize and form attachments in their environment, play freely with others, learn to share things and being able to stay at a place without the sight of parents.
- d) **Physical development:** This involves the development of motor skills.
- e) **Creative Development:** This means the act of show talent and special abilities in identified field of knowledge.
- f) **Emotional Development:** Here, the child develops self-awareness, learns how to own his things and possess it, frowns at loss and being able to express feelings aright.

To achieve the aforementioned, Nichols-Frazer (2021), calls attention to the delicate and vital role

of significant persons in the lives of children. These are the parents, the immediate family members and the teachers. It is important that the teacher understands the learning child and the various stages of growth and development through which children pass their characteristic needs and behaviour at each stage. Adulthood does not start from a vacuum; the developmental stages give rise to phases of life ending in adulthood where accumulated behaviours manifest without much control unlike in childhood (Daines, Hanse, Lelinneth, Novilla & Crandall, 2021).

This allusion is drawn from the Holy Bible that says, "...train up a child in a way he should follow, when he grows up, he will not depart from it." Therefore, early intervention is crucial. The skills developed in childhood form the basis for future learning and labour market success, making childhood a critical time of human capital accumulation with the aim of achieving successful adulthood (Hughes, Lowey, Quigg & Bellis, 2016).

Concept of Education

Airemionkhale (2023), defined education as the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society. In the same vein, Chanzan (2022), defined education as a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefits and that of the society. This shows that education brings about positive changes in the behaviour of an individual

which in turn brings about development. Education makes it possible for persons (child or adult) to be able to cope with changes in their phases of life and environment (Smith, 2021). For one to be able to adapt to these constant developmental changes in all facets of life, education has to be life-long and without limitations.

Life-long education according to Thwe and Kalman (2024), refers to education over one's entire life-span, from birth to death. The reason being that changes occur socially, educationally, economically, politically, etc. Therefore, introducing early childhood education as required according to UNICEF (1998) helps individuals to be stable in managing their life affairs.

Concept of Childhood Education

According to UNICEF (2024), child education incorporates the crèche and early childhood, primary and secondary education. Rymanowicz (2015) maintained that a child here consists of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescent stages. To achieve the set objectives, the young child is totally under the care of the adult. During these stages, the child is malleable, builds and develops personality and character. Albert and Kathryn (2020), explained further that the child depends on significant others; the parents, teachers, guardians, caregivers and peers. These agents are formators and models whom the child models his behaviour through observation, repetition and imitation. With the significant

others available, physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progresses to the peak into adulthood (Rymanowicz, 2015).

World Bank (2018), explained that early childhood forms base of childhood education and it is defined as the period from birth to 8 years old when remarkable brain development do take place in the primary education. Early childhood education therefore refers to the education children receive during early stages of their childhood which forms a critical base for learning and development as human beings (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2024).

Likhar, Baghel and Patil (2022), sees childhood education as care and education given to aid physical, social, psychological and mental growth and development of the child which transits him gradually through other phases of life to a better person.

The Concept of Adulthood

The concept of adulthood means different things to different people. Various communities refer to adulthood in various ways under different situations. There is no definite definition of the word “adult”. This is more confusing when we realize that adult and non-formal education programmes are also designed for out of school children who legally and biologically have not attained the adult age. It is believed that in our society that once a child is born the child has started growing up and maturing, hence education can be referred to as the training and bringing up

of the young with a view to their growing and maturing into adults who can reason and take care of themselves and their societies (Nelson & Luster, 2015). Therefore, an adult is one whom the society where he lives accepts as an adult. In the words of Zhong and Arnett (2014), the word “adult” in adult education does not essentially mean a particular group. This means that education runs through from childhood to youth and to maturing age as a process of constant retooling, updating and equipping, required for them to function adequately in the ever-changing world.

Stages of Human Development

The stages of human development involve the process that occurs in humans over their lifetime. This field aims to study the development of a person from infancy where personality is formed to adulthood. The changes that occur in human beings go along with series of education of all forms. According to Shroff (2023), the 8 stages of human development are:

- i) The Pre-natal,
- ii) The Infancy,
- iii) The Early Childhood,
- iv) Late Childhood,
- v) Adolescent Stage,
- vi) Early Adulthood Stage,
- vii) Middle Adulthood Stage,
- viii) Old Age Stage

The Pre-Natal:

Primitive reflexes are said to have been present even before birth. An ultrasound has revealed that an infant exhibits an array of movements inside the mother's womb. Some of these movements have shown characteristics of more complex reflexes. By the time an infant is born, he/she can already identify his/her mother's voice and long for it more as other voices surrounding him. This shows that a kind of pre-natal development such as voice recognition has already occurred (Miragaia, Sampaio, Guimaraes, Ramalho, Grangeia and Vilan, 2024).

The Infancy: From the time a child is born, language and signs are introduced and the child starts to learn how to talk. This is a kind of education. If no language is introduced, the infant can only produce any sound he hears around him which can even be non-human sound (Kuhl, Tsao & Liu, 2023).

The Early Childhood: It is noted that at this stage, the children start widening their social environment. A child is given constant disciplines which mold him into a more responsible person (Lauren, 2023).

Late Childhood: Shroff (2023) was of the view that the major advantage associated with this stage is that children start exploring the world outside their home, through experiments and obtaining abilities that would enable them to become good workers and possible providers. Furthermore, he noted that if they learn how to gain satisfaction from intellectual stimulation and success, they will

grow into more competent human beings. If they fail to appreciate success, they might feel inferior and inadequate over others (Sesker, Strickhouser, Luchetti, Lee, Aschwanden, Terracciano & Sustin, 2022).

Adolescent Stage: Adolescent is a stage that begins at the onset of the puberty. This is when a person starts developing his personal and social identity, becomes aware of moral responsibility and demonstrates some accumulated intelligence in manifestation of behaviours (Cicia, Meulenbroek & Turkstra, 2018).

Early Adulthood: At this stage, the adult establishes intimate relationship, gains friendship and develops love relationship. However, for one to be able to get to this stage successfully, his early developments must be carried out properly (Shin, Yi & Lee, 2024).

Middle Adulthood Stage: Middle stage starts at the age of 40-60 years. Most middle age people are caught between being productive and stagnant. Either they would feel that they have accomplished their purpose and have become an important figure for the next generation to follow or they would develop a sense of purposelessness (Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz & Waldinger, 2015).

Old Age Stage: This stage is more between integrity and hopelessness. When they reflect back, they feel proud or feel like a failure (Kendra, 2023).

Requirement for Excellent Child Education

Education according to the stages of human development starts from the womb as observed in the recognition of the mother's voice as soon as the baby is born. This education continues from the hospital to home and to the time when the child starts to attend play groups and kindergarten. The learning capabilities of human continue for the rest of their lives but not at the intensity that is demonstrated in the pre-school years (Campbell, Conti, Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Pungello & Pain, 2014). To be effective, an early year's curriculum needs to be carefully structured. In that structure, there should be the following strands: provision for different starting points from which children develop their learning, building on what they can already do, relevant and appropriate content which matches the different levels of young children's needs, planned and purposeful activity which provides opportunities for teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014).

If your child is between the ages of three and six and attends a pre-school or kindergarten programme, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2014) suggests 10 signs for a good classroom:

- 1) Children spent most of their time playing and working with materials or other children. They do not wander aimlessly and they are not expected to sit quickly for long period of time.
- 2) Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Look for assorted building block and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture, books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards and puzzles. All the children should not necessarily be doing the same activity at the same time.
- 3) Teachers work with individual children, some groups, and the whole group at different time during the day. They do not spend their entire time with the whole group.
- 4) The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with indented spelling, and stories dedicated by children teachers.
- 5) Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experience. The natural world of plant and animal and meaning activities like cooking, taking attendance or serving snacks provide the basis for learning activities.
- 6) Children work on project and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Worksheets are used little, if at all.
- 7) Children have an opportunity to play outside everyday. Outdoor play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
- 8) Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.

- 9) Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children's different backgrounds and experience mean that they do not learn the same thing at the same time in the same way.
- 10) Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the programme. Children are happy to attend; they do not cry regularly or complain of feeling sick (NAEYC, 2014).

LaMarr (2017) also maintains that to achieve excellent childhood education, teachers, parents and caregivers should keep the following guiding principles in as much as the child is under the control of the adult:

- i) All children have a right to an education that helps them grow and develop to their fullest.
- ii) Every child is unique and special individual. Consequently, we have to teach individual children and be respectful to and account for their individual uniqueness of age, gender, culture, temperament and learning style.
- iii) Children are active participants in their own development. This means that they should be mentally involved and physically active in learning what they need to know and do.

- iv) Children's ideas, preferences, learning styles are considered in the planning for and implementation of instructional practices.

Moreso UNICEF in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education and Federal Ministry of Health re-emphasizes on excellent child education not only in academic needs, but in living a healthy lifestyle, providing medical immunization for the children, organizing programmes to keep children free from drugs and the protection of fundamental human rights (Kaul, 2019).

The teacher is to provide the environment for this goodness to manifest itself (Kaul, 2019; CRESP, 2024). Ensuring each child in each school and in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged brings practicality to mere verbal emphasis if relevance and quality must be adhered to.

Effects of Investing on Child Education

No one gets to the end without beginning. Adulthood does not emerge without childhood. Introducing all round education to the child as early as possible through to other stages of life leaves him a highly educated in nation personnel (CRESP, 2024). The effects of this development can be seen in manpower production, human capital development, economic growth, national and international competence in technological advancement. The adult is the immediate/present nation-builder while the child is prepared for the future. Therefore, early preparation of the child

gets the adult ready for successful actions towards the changing world (UNESCO, 2024).

Isabel, Sawhill, Tebbs and Dicksons (2016) found that investing in early education increases economic growth. A more educated labour force is more mobile and adaptable, can learn new tasks and new skills more easily, can use a wider range of technologies and sophisticated equipment (including new emerging ones) and is more creative in thinking about how to improve the management of work (Isabel et al, 2016). All of these attributes not only make a more highly skilled worker more productive than a less skilled one but also enable employers to organize their work places differently and adjust better to changes necessitated by competition by technical advances or by changes in consumer demand. The benefits of having a more educated workforce accrue to everyone not just to the organization where these individuals happen to work. Imagine an economy lacking in people able to read directions, use a sophisticated copier or a computer, or understand prevailing norms of behaviours. Remember, the workforce consists of known adults (JEC, 2024).

NAEYC (2024) on the same note alluded that high quality and developmentally appropriate early childhood programmes produce short and long term positive effects on children's cognitive and social development which guide the personality through to future. The body stipulates that all young children deserve excellent early care and education; that high quality early experiences

make a difference in children's life-long academic and social success; that these programmes must be accessible to all families; that effective early education must be both challenging and appropriate to young children's ages, individual needs are culture; that everyone needs to work together to build a successful future for our young children.

However, NAEYC laments that these stipulations are not inherent and not being put into practices in many state countries. The reason being that most parents do not care about the child's education, therefore no parental effectiveness is enhanced and programmes are not enriched to meet the changing world. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019), Abhishek and Balamurugan (2024), observed that numerous problems facing the nations are as a result of the children not being properly guided such as incessant kidnappings, bombings, lack of peace, drug abuse, trafficking, child labour, prostitution, examination malpractice, corruption, violence of all kinds, murder, robbery of all kinds, cultism, etc, which manifest in the immediate adult. On this note, Oludola (2024) maintains that learning to live in a world without these problems does not come by decree. It can only be achieved by a plan of action that is perfectly structured that leads the children and fill their mind with norms, values and behaviours that lead them towards the assumption of peace and the rejection of violence as essential components of their personalities. This has to be

done when the personality of the children is being formed and not later.

Investing in child education strengthens the future of any country. This reduces problems and strengthens adult and non-formal education in the achievement of its objectives in the country. A major role is seen in achieving education for all, and the Millennium Development Goals set out. It impacts the readiness and yearn for further education which equips adulthood. Oluka and Igwe (2020), found that early life intervention prepares the ground for social mobilization, civic engagement, participation, patriotism and the like.

As observed by Dumciuviene (2015) and Suna and Ozer (2024), early intervention is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The reason being that if early education which is the foundation is not adequately and properly laid, it is more likely that the remaining or subsequent levels of education will be shaky and unbalanced. As a result, the adult may not count himself successful if he cannot adequately deal with his challenges. According to Oluka and Igwe (2020), foundations can be properly laid to foster national integration and harmony among diverse ethnic and religious group. Children easily learn how to accommodate each other even in an unfavourable condition once this has been impacted and maintained through interrelated educational systems, which ultimately leads to national unity.

Recommendations

In order to achieve a functional and successful adulthood, the author feels that the following steps should be taken:

- i) Government should regularly supervise the conditions necessary for teaching and implementation as stipulated in the National Policy on Education.
- ii) Parents should be involved in programmes that involve their children in order to enhance parents' effectiveness.
- iii) Government should improve the curriculum content in the early child education in Nigeria to include such issues like defence mechanisms, songs portraying evils of killings, produce films showing peace and unity.
- iv) Teachers should maintain child's competence and knowledge in the learning contents before recommendation into a higher class.

Conclusion

Early educational intervention which is the foundation of other educational systems should be laid properly to avoid abrupt collapse of the individuals. An adult cannot node his head to acknowledge his fulfillment without all round education with a good foundation. An illiterate rich man will always wish he had gone to school. Therefore, excellent child education is very crucial to everyone, every family and every nation. The

relevance and quality should never be undermined by any patriotic citizen that wants his nation to deal with the challenging world. As the child rallies on the parents, teachers and caregivers, a wakeup call extends to everyone to achieve the objectives set.

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