

Perceived Parental Roles in Adolescents Acquisition of Education among Senior Secondary School Students in Gombe Town

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Abstract

This paper made an attempt to discover and examine the roles which adolescents in senior secondary schools in Gombe town expect that parents should play in their efforts to receive proper education. In efforts to address the problem, the author designed an instrument that contains seven items which are considered as roles parents are expected to play in order to assist their wards receive proper education. Fifty adolescents were randomly selected and served the instrument. Their responses were analyzed and the mean scores were used to rank the expected roles of parents. Results show that the highest expected role of parents by the adolescents is that parents spare time daily to go through their school work. Interestingly, payment of school fees and purchase of materials ranked the fourth out of the seven items. Recommendations were made at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Parents, Adolescents, Acquisition

1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to call the attention of the Nigerian parents to its educational tasks with particular emphasis on adolescent education. The question this paper seeks to answer is; what roles do adolescents in Gombe town suppose the contemporary parent should play towards assisting them acquisition education? The statement this paper intends to establish is that, problems associated with contemporary adolescent behaviour in Nigeria can be greatly minimized if and when adolescents are provided with proper education.

It is the view of this paper that when parents play their roles properly, the quality of adolescent behaviour would greatly improve and at the same time, the society would enjoy the benefits of having more enlightened citizens to contribute to developmental strides of the country. This is a view that finds support in the submission of psychologists like Makinde (1983) who opined that all behavior problems can be healed through educational processes. Similarly, educational theorists like, J. Comenius, J. H. Pestalozzi, J. J. Rousseau, J. F. Herbert and F. W. Froebel, have rightly argued that education is a potent tool for changing individuals and societies positively (Reed and Prevost, 1993). Problems confronting Nigerian adolescents are basically those of character and decision making, elements which Kohlberg described as the essence of morality (Kohlberg in Brenda, 1980) which can be corrected through education.

In this paper, perceived refers to the understanding or interpretation adolescents have or give respectively to the roles their parents should play in the process of their education. The word Parental is the adjective form of the parent which refers to a person's father, mother or legal guardian (Encarta Dictionary). Adolescent refers to the human developmental stage which characterizes young people of usually between the ages of twelve to eighteen years of age. Role is an abstract concept which in this paper refers to the ideas people has about how certain people are to conduct their ways or perform their duties (BBC Dictionary of English Language, 1992). Education is a term variously defined as the art of teaching and training of young people (Adeyemo, 1972). It is a deliberate process that should aim at change of behaviour in a participant in a positive way. Education also implies achievements in several areas of human endeavours that include physical, social and intellectual developments, personal and social adjustments, and possession of social skills that enhances contribution to the development of society (Ola, 1985).

Above definitions show education as a process that involves an art. In the opinion of this writer, education is the process of assisting an individual becomes what he has the potentials to become and which they could never become without the education. An education is referred to as proper when it focuses on the training and equipping the total person; the physical, spiritual and moral aspects of the individual. Such education would have addressed the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of an individual's education. This paper briefly examines the

characteristics of adolescents, the challenges which the contemporary Nigerian society poses to the adolescents and the roles which adolescents in Gombe town suppose Nigerian parents should play towards their acquisition of proper education.

2. Literature Review

The literatures reviewed were presented under the following subtopics; adolescent education, channels made available for adolescent Education, characteristics and needs that identify with adolescents, challenges which contemporary Nigerian Society poses to adolescents and curriculum for proper Education.

2.1 Adolescent Education

The importance of adolescents primarily lies in the fact that, adolescents constitute a significant percentage of the total human population of the nation. Adolescents also constitute the future adults and leaders of the nation and how the future would look like for the country depends on how the present adolescents are nurtured and adequately prepared for future challenges. When the period of adolescence is not properly guided and handled, it signals future social and spiritual problems for the individual, the immediate and extended family and the society at large. To indicate the importance of adolescent period amongst different African groups, there is entrenchment of cultural practices to mark its phase. This is done through the prescriptions of formal but extremely significant set of ceremonies to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood and it is relative to cultures. Some cultures practice initiation which is a form of education for an adolescent towards acquiring the knowledge of behaviours and attitudes expected of adult members of the community (Hubber, 1971).

2.2 Channels Made Available for Adolescent Education

Educational channels made available for adolescents in contemporary Nigeria include, the formal schools of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning; the community education of apprenticeship in different kinds of vocations including joining of family vocations; and educational programmes organized by religious groups which cover age-grades. However, one of the problems with most educational programmes is the failure to regularly review the programs such that they respond to contemporary issues like changes in values and accelerated knowledge at the disposal of adolescents. Again, in formal school systems moral education is omitted while religious education is optional. These omissions make it difficult for utilization of the teaching of religions for character formation in adolescent in schools. Deliberate efforts at helping adolescents develop moral characters which make them capable of making independent moral choices on matters of importance to them is almost lacking. Education is to form and strengthen character and at the same time develop intelligence in pupils. This has been a standing educational objective even when Nigerian was still a fragmented piece of political entities; one is at loss to understand the reasons for non-attainment of such objective by both the Government and stake holders in the education over fifty years after attaining the status of an independent nation. This objective aligns more with proper education.

2.3 Characteristics and Needs that Identify with Adolescents

There are different views about the adolescent stage of human development. While some human developmental psychologists like Erickson, Kohlberg, Skinner and Lewin agreed that adolescent period is a critical and yet crucial stage in human development; others view the period as that which is associated with problems of behaviour, particularly in the areas of alcohol abuse, drug use, truancy, pre-marital pregnancy and violence of different kinds. Adolescence should be a period when young people begin to develop abilities to choose courses of action deliberately and rationally in contrast to pursuit of pleasure like children. This is because during the adolescent period, the mind is greatly developed, so also are potentials, personality traits, emotional characteristics and identity. There are reasonable changes in reasoning capability with increasing objectivity in patterns of thinking. Physiological changes are accelerated as the body takes a unique shape with maturing of sexual and reproductive organs. The changes occurring in the adolescent indicate process of maturity which is automatically accompanied with special needs. These special needs can be grouped into physiological, psychological and sociological needs.

- 2.3.1 Physiological needs include the need for food, water, sleep and activities for self-development. When physiological needs remained unattended to, adolescents may develop attitudes of restlessness, irritation, drowsiness, boredom, fidgeting, militancy, mischief making or other behaviour problems

(Stann and Ugwegbu, 1990). The common incidence of abandoning adolescents to engage in any kind of activity to provide for their needs, pay all the bills and go on with life is not a good enough way of educating adolescents.

- 2.3.2 Psychological needs of adolescents include the need for acceptance by peer groups, parents, siblings, school environment and members of the community. The need for belonging provides avenue for integration, comparative indicators with peers, recognition, prestige, promotion of self-esteem and achievements. Psychological needs also include the need for independence as a result of which adolescents normally resent being told what to do all of the time (Atwood, 1991). Adolescents can react with confrontations, stubbornness and insubordination as show of independence and demand that their independence be respected. They dislike the attitude of not being consulted before reaching decisions on their behalf. Normally, they want to work without compulsion and prefer to be invited to make contributions into decisions that will affect them. This is because adolescents' desire that their considerable physical, social and intellectual prowess be appreciated even though, they want to be helped in difficult situations (Deci and Ryan, 1985). When psychological needs remained unattended to, there can be emotional instability, depression, frustration and consequent exhibition of delinquent behaviours.
- 2.3.3 Sociological needs involve adolescents' recognition of the changes in their physical features which as consequence demands their developing the ability to enter into intimate relationships with an opposite sex on a level that may lead to marriage. Because of this awareness, institutions and homes should not be too regimented with too many rules for the adolescent. Rules for arrival after certain programmes, rules for play and who to play with, rules for work, rules for meals, rules for accepting tasks etcetera should be flexible enough to allow the adolescent recognize that their interests are considered. This is not however, advocating for carelessness nor encouraging of acts of indiscipline. It has been observed that too much control over adolescents can lead to a sense of insecurity, despiracy and dependency characteristics (Udoh and Akpa, 1994).

An adolescent subjected to too much of control may be incapable of addressing difficulties that may confront him on a daily basis when he grows to become an adult. There may even be the possibility that such an adolescent will not like to open up to receive new training in self-development and as a result grow to become increasingly inept in social situations (Babawale, 2007). When this happens, the expectation that a potential future leadership candidate is being groomed becomes a mirage. The peculiar needs of adolescents require that parents and the entire society pay special attention to them to guarantee a worthwhile future society.

2.4 Challenges which Contemporary Nigerian Society Posses to Adolescents

Nigeria is an aggregation of different nationalities that have agreed to exist as a single nation and like any other human organization, the country is dynamic. Changes are regular features and they are rooted in the fluctuating economic conditions, patterns of migration, and new advances in information technology, successes recorded in medical and scientific disciplines and changing social conditions (Ibid).

Challenges with regard to economic situations manifest for instance, when there is growing incidence of people putting in more hours of work only to earn less income. Poverty is growing without discovering and applying effective measures to stem its growth and daily, people are put out of jobs without getting alternative sources of income. There seems to be a preference for violence than of a culture of peaceful disposition to life. One major effect that the above changes have on Nigerians is that, people are forced to subtly but steadily alter their patterns of living and in most cases in descending dimensions. Adolescents in such conditions are confused about what is happening when for instance their parents have to change schools they attend for lack of capability to pay for their schools fees. They become frustrated sometimes because of losing their familiar friends and teachers and adjusting to a new school with less or inferior facilities when compared with the schools from where they were relocated.

With respect to Immigration of families from rural to urban settlements and transfer of workers from familiar places to areas with different cultural peculiarities and value systems; adolescents face serious challenges. Typical of many homes in urban settlements, housemaids have displaced mothers as home builders. Unfortunately, majority of these housemaids are not emotionally mature and are ill-prepared for the task of motherhood but

regrettably, many adolescents grew under the care and supervision of different housemaids. Sometimes the housemaids are not from the same ethnic groups with the biological parents of the adolescents and the effects of being under the care of different housemaids tell on adolescents when they consider how secure they see themselves socially and emotionally as they grow into adulthood. Adolescents in this regard face the challenges of cultural relevance, knowledge and practice of acceptable norms.

Again, due to housing problems, adolescents may be forced to encounter with different environmental factors and people of strange and probably unacceptable value systems and philosophies of life. Demands for social integration necessarily place on the adolescents the challenge to conform or rebel to the status quo. As an example, in some areas within the Nigerian society, there seems to be an inverted value system in which praise, honour and respect are accorded to money and power and those who possessed them even, if those things they possess were acquired through criminal and ungodly means. Good name that should be cherished as better than Silver and Gold (Prov. 22: 1) is no more the desired goal of many. Heroic performances and honest achievements are scarcely accorded the pride of place by failure to adequately reward those who do them publicly. Adolescents are therefore, left to ponder on the choice to engage in wrong doing to make money and power so as to become popular and be recognized or to be honest and remain at the background. The writer of this paper however, does not recommend wrongdoing as an alternative to engaging in legitimate means of acquiring material gains.

There is the challenge of available internet services, electronic gadgets and other technological inventions which assist adolescents gain access to information both positive and negative. Mass media through films, videos, CDs and Magazines infest the minds of adolescents with their productions that most times promote immorality of all kinds and because adolescents are inquisitive and exploratory, they would not close their eyes nor block their ears to things going on around them. There is no doubting the fact that the Nigerian society is saturated with demonic presence and activities and rather than religious leaders taking their positions and fighting forces of darkness in the Lord's power, they constantly seek to become relevant to the State authorities so as to avoid isolation (Peterside, 1995: 110). In the circumstance, adolescents are faced with the challenge of understanding what is best for them and how to sustain their position in right choices, issues which are not of serious concerns for many religious leaders.

The curriculum for proper education should as a matter of priority teach moral education, positive aspects of cultural norms and practices, religious knowledge, citizenship education, history of the people group where school is located and that of the nation including founding fathers, biographies of important personalities, mathematics and other pure sciences, ethics and other social sciences. Teachers are to be individuals within the society who have shown good examples of citizenship and Christian virtues and trained in the principles of teaching/learning.

3 Perspectives of Adolescents on Roles Parents should play in their Educational Process (Methodology)

For the purpose of ascertaining the perspectives adolescents in Gombe senior secondary schools have on the roles parents should play in their educational process, an instrument that contained seven possible roles parent may play was prepared and administered on fifty students in different secondary schools within Gombe town. The responses were quantified and the results obtained were analyzed using the mean scores to rank the responses.

4 Result

Table: Adolescents' perception of Parental roles in their educational endeavours.

Rank	ITEMS	N	X score	SD
1.	My parents go through my work after school.	50	2.64	0.52
2.	My parents attend my school's speech and prize giving day.	50	2.54	0.50
3.	My parents ask me about the subjects which give me difficulties or pleasure in school.	50	2.41	0.57
4.	My parents sometimes visit my school to ask after me from my principal and teachers.	50	2.16	0.49
5.	My parents always ask for my result sheet immediately our school vacates.	50	2.20	1.06
6.	My parents pay my school fees and provide for my school materials as at when due to save me from embarrassment.	50	2.28	0.54
7.	My parents always speak well of my teachers in school.	50	1.90	0.57

According to the analysis on table above, the most valuable parental role is that, parents should go through their school work daily on returning from school, it scored highest mean of 2.64 (1st). This is followed by the expectation that parents attend their school's speech and prize giving day which scored a mean of 2.54 (2nd). The next in the line of adolescents expected roles of parents is that parents should ask them about the subjects that give them difficulties or pleasure in the school. This item had a mean score of 2.41 (3rd). The next expected parental role is that, their school fees and other required materials for successful education be promptly attended to, it scored a mean of 2.28 (4th). After this, is the expected role that parents should ask of their result sheets immediately the school vacates, it scored a mean of 2.20 (5th). The next is that parents should pay occasional visits to their schools and ask of their welfare from their teachers and the school authority, it scored a mean of 2.16 (6th). The least expected role of parents in adolescent expectation is that parents speak well about their teachers; it had a mean score of 1.90 (7th).

5 Findings

In view of the above discoveries it becomes imperative on parents to consider the following factors in order to assist their adolescents receive proper education:

- A. Show practical interest and participation in adolescents' process of education, both in and out of formal school environment. This can be achieved when at home parents initiate discussions about adolescents school problems, help to solve difficult home work, volunteer to attend school organized plays, sporting events, worship programmes, speech and prize giving day and other events in which members of the public are invited or welcomed. Parents should speak well to adolescents about their school's headmasters, teachers, lessons and activities. Adolescents are to be sensitized and made aware of the importance and future benefits of the education they are acquiring. When these are done, commitment to educational process and appreciation of the values which education instills would be stirred up within the adolescent.
- B. Parents should inculcate into adolescents with practical examples the positive and cherished values of Nigerian cultures. Those values that promote virtues of hard work, decent earnings, tolerance, respect for elders, mutual respect for the views and opinion of other people, dignity of labour, selfless acts of heroism and expression of love within communal living. This kind of education would most be effective in an atmosphere of warmth, love, peace, trust that is devoid of hatred and divorce in marriages. Through repeated emphases the message of building good home based on godly principles should be propagated. When from infancy adolescents are treated with love, they are most likely to possess the capacity to love and retain the teachings they received from childhood.

- C. Parents should make sacrifices to meet up with the diverse needs of adolescents such that they are not allowed to feel inferior or rejected among their peers. They should talk regularly with adolescents providing them with guidance and counseling in the areas of sex and sexuality, relationships, vocations and spirituality. Parents need to practice what Ivory described as “radically involved love” (Ivory, 1997), which meant that objects of individual’s love must be given a deserving attention at all times.
- D. Parents should provide spiritual cover for their adolescents. This writer is of the opinion that the Nigerian society is corrupt and infested with negative spiritual forces and agents. Their influences manifest in the forms of suspicious religious ideologies, philosophies and practices which have capacity to render an adolescent to become confused and irrational. For above reasons parents are required to pray regularly with and for their adolescents.
- E. Parents need to make every effort to teach adolescents the Word of God deliberately and diligently. They should be observant, loving and relating well with adolescents being diligent enough to know the sources of their spiritual experiences, knowledge and practices.

6 Conclusion

This paper has examined perspectives of adolescents in senior secondary schools in Gombe town and the roles they expect parents to play in their efforts to acquire proper education. It discussed the different fora made available for adolescents’ education; examined the characteristics that identify with adolescents, the contemporary Nigerian society and the challenges it poses for adolescents. The paper has also suggested roles which parents may play towards adolescents’ acquisition of proper education. Recommendations were also made.

7 Recommendations

- a). Parents should maintain theological integrity by being focused to the vision and mission of religious teachings. Nottingham (2004), rightly described this as “hope in action.” Applying Nottingham’s comments to parents; they need to be an active liberalize agent in God’s historical project of improvements in moral, social and spiritual conditions of adolescents.
- b). Nigerian parents should mobilize governments at all levels and organizations to create functioning social ministries to be responsible for youth unemployment, drug addiction, adolescent pregnancy, psychological and spiritual depression.
- c.). Nigerian parents should speak out on issues of public concern. They should speak against corruption, violence, exploitation and the widening gap between the rich and the poor because they are expected to make impacts on the political and cultural domains of the society.
- d). Nigerian parents should take note of the methods they employ to help adolescents acquire proper education. McDaniel (1998) pointed out that methods which involve learners in setting agendas by using peer involvement and utilizing parental and community support achieve better results.

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