

GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE PIVOT OF ACHIEVING QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Haruna Sheidu & Suleiman Jibril Samaila

Department of Social Studies, Federal College of Education, Katsina.P.M.B 2041 Katsina State

Email: sheiduharuna10@gmail.com, **Phone:** 08062261606.

Abstract

Primary education is the basis or foundation upon which all level of education is built. A sound and quality primary education determines the learner's performance at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. The paper examined the concepts of primary education, quality education, good governance and sustainable national development. The paper also identified the challenges facing the attainment of quality primary education in Nigeria which includes: lack of confidence teaching/learning environment, inadequate personnel, lack of qualified personnel, Inadequate/poor funding. The paper concludes that: good governance is the best option for attaining quality primary education in Nigeria for sustainable national development. It was recommended in the paper that: qualified teachers should be recruited, adequate budgetary allocation should be made available to education and special salary package should be introduced for teachers in primary school to put in their best for quality primary educational attainment and sustainable national development.

Keywords: Primary education, quality education, good governance and sustainable national development

Introduction

The quality of educational attainment in Nigeria in recent time is disheartening due to the fact that all levels of education starting from primary to the University is faced with serious challenge of learners' poor performance. The quality of educational attainment at one level has significant impact on the other level. For instance, if the learners' performance at the primary level is very sound, it is expected that the performance at the secondary and the tertiary level will be encouraging. Primary education is the base or basic foundation to all level of education the world over Nigeria inclusive. Primary education is the pillar upon which all levels of education starting from junior secondary to university lies. Primary need to be adequately taken care of since the foundation is the basis for the success or failure of any project to be embarked upon. This is due to the fact that, if a building foundation is properly laid, the building can hardly collapse with time, but if the foundation is poorly laid it will easily collapse. Excellent education policies are meaningless without corresponding excellent teachers to see to their realization. Therefore there is need to employ teachers that are knowledgeable, progressive, effective, competent and efficient at all levels of education for qualitative growth and development in the teaching profession in Nigeria most especially at the primary schools since they are the foundation upon which all other levels of education are built. One will regret the conscious effects of ignorance on a nation and so to this end, one can proudly state that the spindle upon which education policies rotates is the teacher.

Primary education is preceded after baby class, pre-school, pre-unit or nursery education and eventually continued with primary schools which are followed later by secondary education (Abdullahi, 2013). The author further stressed that in the United States of America (USA), education is very much part of daily lives with more than one in every four children of 3 years and above are enrolled into school. In Africa, over the past decade many countries in sub Sahara Africa like Malawi (1994), Zambia (2002), Tanzania (2001), Uganda (1997), Kenya (1963) including Nigeria (1976) introduced Free Primary Education to revive educational system that has been on the decline and even suffered enrollment after the initial growth after independence due to several factors like inability of the parents to cope with their responsibilities, environmental factors and corruption.

Successive governments in Nigeria have put measure to raise educational standards in the country such as Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) for quality educations at primary levels in Nigeria yet positive results has not been achieved despite the laudable objectives

of education as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE2013) which includes the development of:

- I. Free and democratic society.
- II. Just and egalitarian society.
- III. Land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens.
- IV. United string and self reliant nation.
- V. Great and dynamic economy.

Nigerian education system at all levels suffers from one problem or the other and some of these challenges facing Nigerian society at times have their origin rooted in shallow primary educational attainment. Nigerians had not at anytime been fully satisfied with the performance of its education in meeting national needs before and after independence. Though an effort by some educationist to remodel the nation's educational system began before independence (Gusau 2008). The effort became more emphasized in 1969 during the national curriculum conference held in Lagos leading to the emergence of a document on education called " National policy on education" (N.P.E.) which was printed first in 1977 (Yusuf and Yusuf 2000). The document spelt out clearly the philosophy, goals, design and content of Nigerian educational system at various levels. Quality assurance in education is a unit in educational institution that enhances teacher's productivity and quality in educational attainment in all levels of education through proper monitoring and supervision.

Surprisingly, it is becoming increasingly clearer to many stake holders in education industry that Nigerian education is deficient in her products compared to the goals, design, philosophy and content of the educational system which is geared towards solving national problems for growth and development (Omede 2012). Education of many country supposed to be the light through which it see and the base of growth and development. This is because without quality education, no country can grow economically, politically, socially, culturally, morally, technologically and scientifically. As a result of important role of education, government all over the world have placed high premium on educational development of their various nations. In recognition of the above assertion the United Nations general assembly states in 1948 that every individual has the right to compulsory education at the primary school level (Adagba 2013). Successive government in Nigeria have established policies and programs aimed at achieving policies and programs of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 during General Olusegun Obasanjo regime .The 6-3-3-4 system of education and Universal Basic Education (UBE) was re-launched in 1999 September 30th by president Olusegun Obasanjo as well as (Nder 2013) all aiming at achieving quality education in Nigeria but it seems that all efforts put in place to achieve those aims is a mirage probably as a result bad, good governance corruption and poor implementation among others. It is on this bases the paper addresses the factors affecting quality education such as good governance, as well as adequate funding and suggests possible ways of improving on the situation for quality educational attainment in primary education Nigeria for sustainable development.

Conceptual Clarification

This paper attempts to clarify some concepts such as good governance, quality education, quality assurance, and sustainable development.

Good Governance

Governance can be described as the effective and efficient management of public affairs and good resources by democratically elected leaders and their appointees. According to Ayantayo (2012) he defines good governance as a process of a specific part of management or leadership processes. He further defines good governance as something that relates to decision which define expectations, grand power, or verify performance. According to political analyst, good governance consist of eight characteristics which are participatory, accountable, transparency, responsive, consensus oriented, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive as well as in accordance to the rule of law. Effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and transparency are key requirement of good governance on the part of public officers in decision making. G00d governance promote social reconciliation, peace- building, as well as brotherhood; it equally encompasses positive dialogue, authentic humanism, abundant provision of social amenities, and equitable and just distribution of resources to the citizens though it does not mean that good governance is in any way imply perfection (

Okebukola 2012). However good governance involves respect for dignity of human being and human rights' where individuals are to be respected and recognized.

Quality Education

Quality education has been described by many scholars like Agih (2011), Idumeji (2007) and Slade (2017) in different ways due to their divergent level of knowledge. Quality Education is that type of education that produce effective and functional citizens that contribute to the development of the society socially, morally, culturally, politically, economically and technologically. Quality education is a multidimensional concept which should embrace all functions and activities like teaching an academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing and students, building facilities, equipment, services to the community and academic environment as affirmed by Agih (2011). As contend earlier, quality education requires both human and material resources and effective teaching and learning therefore central to the development of any nation as a conscious effort to develop the human resources. But since 1960, it was only educated people equipped with skills that could catalyze development. Countries like Asia, Japan, and Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia citizens have maximally applied the theory for development engineering. Sadly however, Nigerians only paid lip service to human development (Idumeji 2007). Quality education is defined by five elements via: the learner's outside experiences, learning environment, content of education, learning processes, and education outcomes.

Learners must be healthy, well- nourished and supported by their families and communities. The learning environment should be safe, healthy and stimulating. Appropriate education content is relevant to the learners and presented in a well-managed classroom. Learning out comes should meet and promotes participation in society. All five of the factors must be present for learners to receive a quality education. To measure the quality of education, outcomes are examined. Learner's academic achievements should match their age and grade level and meet national standards. Quality education is essential to real learning and human development which is influenced by factors both inside and outside the classroom, from the availability of proper supplies to the nature of a child's home environment. In addition to enabling the transfer of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a profession and break the cycle of poverty, quality plays a critical role in closing the gender gap in basic education. United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2017).

A quality education is not one that is measured purely by a test score or by how many words per minute 5-year old pupils can read. To back up these simplified measurements is to do a disservice to both the student and quality education itself (Slade, 2017). Slade further stressed that quality education focuses on the child social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing. A quality education provides resources and directs policy to ensure that each child enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle, learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults; is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community; has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults; and is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment. A quality education provides the outcomes needed for individuals, communities, and societies to prosper. It allows schools to align and integrate fully with their communities and access a range of services across sectors designed to support the educational development of their students. Quality education is supported by four key pillars: ensuring access to quality teachers; providing use of quality learning tools and professional development; and the establishment of safe and supportive quality learning environments (Slade, 2017). Quality education is one that provides all learners with capabilities required to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. Some of the key elements that affect the quality of education with regards to the current study includes: what students bring to learning, environments, content, processes and outcomes.

Quality Assurance

Since Primary education is the foundation upon which other levels of education is built, it is expected to produce learners within the context of the needs of the nation for attainment of its goals by intensifying efforts and diversifying their programmes for production of qualified and well trained manpower that will bring about a change in behaviour and attitudes of the learners in an expected manner. Supporting the above assertion, Abanyam (2010) stated that policy expects college of education to make optimal contribution to national development by intensifying and diversifying their program for development of manpower to achieve its goals.

In order to achieve quality primary education and attain the objective of Social Studies at the primary school, there is need to establish quality control and assurance at various Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) to monitor, supervise and ensure quality in teaching and learning process for the attainment of desired objectives of primary education. Quality education according to Ogbuanya and Usoro (2009) is the level of achievement, a standard against which to judge others .In the opinion of Ugwu (2012) he note that quality is essentially about learning what one is doing well and doing it better. It is equally concerned about what one may need to change to make sure one meets the needs of the service user.

Quality assurance is a process of viewing and accessing what pertains to an institution to ensure that the functional aspects of the institutions are maintained. The purpose of quality assurance is to build capacity within an institution for pursuing quality and improvement leading to stakeholders' satisfaction (Manickam & Begun, 2011). To them, this can be achieved through quality assessment involving both internal and external process. It keeps the institutions abreast of the needs and demands of individual and groups. It is a continuous process aiming at excellence. This could come in form of self analysis and assessment internally within an institution of learning be it primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively. Quality control and assurance also takes the form of external accreditation when external accreditation teams are involved in accessing the level of quality of an institution. Some agency has focuses on in-service and pre-service teacher education for enhancing professional development of teachers for varied aspect of education, granting quality assessment and accreditation.

However, quality assurance determine quality, both fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose (Ode & Ochim 2011).To them fitness for purpose is related to educational missions in an institution of learning of what have been set for themselves while fitness of purpose is their ability and capacity to achieve the national goals. Ahobee (2011) sees quality assurance as a proactive means of ensuring quality in educational programme. Quality control and assurance in educational programme is aimed at ensuring quality by ensuring that the product of the system is in conformity with expected standard in education.

Quality assurance has been assumed to reflect on standard and qualification of teachers in primary schools as well as academic growth. This assumption could only be interpreted when teachers are assessed for quality in their performance and learners achievement. In support of the forgoing, analysis, Olejide (2009) opined that, the interest of quality control and assurance (QCA) is to carry out periodic audit of their programmes to identify their strengths and weakness. To Olejide, audit should cover teaching effectiveness, assessment of courses and teachers, textbooks, instructional facilities, capacity development to ensure that the needs of service users (learners) are met.

Functions of the quality assurance unit

Functions of quality control and assurance unit in education according to U.B.E (2017) among others includes:

- a. Develop, apply and periodically review the quality benchmarks/parameters for various academic and administrative activities of the institution;
- b. Facilitate the creation of a learner- centered environment conducive to quality education and academic staff professional growth;
- c. Provide feedback mechanisms for students, parents and, other stakeholders on quality-related issues;
- d. Disseminate information on various quality parameters of teacher education;

- e. Organize inter and intra institutional workshop, seminars on quality related themes;
- f. Document various programmes/activities leading to quality improvement;
- g. Act as the model unit of the institution for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of best practices;
- h. Work closely with academic department and the institution's Management information Systems (MIS) for the purpose of management/enhancing the institutional quality;
- i. Promote and help sustain the culture of quality on the institution;
- j. Lead the internal self-assessment process and prepare and submit the report to U.B.E board annually;and
- k. Coordinate Logistics during external accreditation/assessment.

Sustainable Development

Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism as attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development in different way due their divergent opinions. Some of these definitions will be explored for the purpose of this paper viz:

According to Lawal & Oluwatoyin (2011) development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, as it demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. Development seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. The author believes that development usually involves not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life.

Development is also a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is reasonable to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life.

Oladosu (2014) in his view conceptualize development as an inclusive concept which covers social, political and economic facet, it involves qualitative and quantitative transformation of people's life because it encompasses attitude, structures, institutions, economic growth, improved capabilities and conditions of human life (Oladiti and Oyewale, 2010). Sustainable development is defined multidimensional as a result of differences in the opinion of scholars from different perspective. Sustainable development connotes an intergenerational development that takes into consideration not only the wellbeing of present but also that of future generation (Wahab, 2014). Sustainable development refers to a gradual process of growth towards a more advance stage in a continuous manner. According to Oladosu (2014), sustainable development addresses four major challenges faced by states in their efforts at maximizing the welfare of the people.

The four challenges are;

- i. Achieving competitiveness in a diversify economy.
- ii. Refocusing agriculture to remove hunger.
- iii. Reducing the gap of inequality and poverty.
- iv. Promoting peace and mutual coexistence.

However, in the content of this paper, it is imperative to add attainment of quality education as one of the challenge faced by a state. Therefore, sustainable development is possible to the extent by which the state is able to attain the above ideals when it can be uninterruptedly withstand stress that tends to undermine its development.

Challenges to the provision of Quality Education in Nigeria

There are many challenges that face the provision of quality education in Nigeria. Some of these challenges hinder the attainment of primary school Social Studies in Nigeria and North Central Geopolitical Zone in particular. Among the challenges facing the provision of quality education in Nigeria are; lack of qualified Teachers, inadequate recruitment of staff, poor learning environment

and class rooms, lack of instructional materials and textbooks, nonpayment of teachers salaries as at when due, bad leadership, lack of proper monitoring and supervision of teachers by relevant authorities, poor welfare of teachers, corruption , parent attitudes towards staff and school management, lack of seriousness in the learner and inadequate funding by the Government among others.

Many scholars like Plessis (2014), submit that in reality, education is often characterized by poor quality and unequal access. The author stated that numerous challenges to getting a basic primary education includes : Classroom overcrowding, poorly maintained primary schools, absent teachers, lack of textbooks, parents' social status, corruption and students' efforts. According to Joseph (2018), challenges of quality primary education include: lack of experience and adequate teachers, lack of proper management of schools, lack of teachers training, lack of proper inspection routine to primary schools by relevant authorities and lack of appropriate implementation of primary education policy. Some of the submissions put forward by Joseph are in agreement with the researcher's view. In another related development, Kolawale (2018), also supported the view of the researchers and Joseph by itemizing fifteen (15) problems facing quality primary education in Nigeria as thus;

- i. Poor funding
- ii. Poor governance
- iii. Corruption
- iv. Indiscipline
- v. Lack of responsibility and control
- vi. Poor parenting and guidance
- vii. Lack of infrastructure
- viii. Politicization of education
- ix. Unwillingness to study education courses in schools
- x. Lack of good teachers' welfare
- xi. Unstable staff
- xii. Unstable curriculum and subjects
- xiii. Unaffordable education
- xiv. Lack of teaching aids
- xv. Scarcity and prohibitive cost of books at all levels of education.

Poor Funding

Funding of the basic level of education can be said to be neglected by the government at the Federal, State and Local levels because the National Policy on Education states that financing basic education should be the collective responsibility of these various tiers of Government. An analysis of the Federal government's annual budget allocation to education revealed that the government is in the habit of allocating low amounts of money to the educational sector. Habibu (2011) observe that inadequate funding is one of the greatest obstacles of quality primary education in Nigeria because the annual budget is far below 26% prescribed by UNESCO either by Federal or State government. This is very evident in the year 2009 in which the percentage budgetary allocation to education was set at 7.25%, it decreased to 4% in the year 2010. It then increased to 6% in 2011 and then increased further to 8.20% in 2012. It rose considerably to 8.55% in 2013; it increased tremendously to 9.94% in 2014. It decreased drastically between 2015 and 2016. This is because 7.74% and 6.10% of the annual budget allocation was given to education sector in 2015 and 2017 respectively. The budgetary allocation increased in 2017 to 7.38% and decreased to 7.03% in 2018. Budgetary allocation to education within ten (10) years is far from the 26% recommended benchmark by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as shown in the table below:

FG Budgetary allocation to education (2009-2018)			
Year	Budget	Educ Allocation	% of budget
2009	3.049 trn	N221.19 bn	7.25
2010	5.160 trn	N249.09 bn	4.83
2011	4.972 trn	N306.3 bn	6.16
2012	4.877 trn	N400.15 bn	8.20
2013	4.987 trn	N426.53 bn	8.55
2014	4.962 trn	N493 bn	9.94
2015	5.068 trn	N392.2 bn	7.74
2016	6.061 trn	N369.6 bn	6.10
2017	7.444 trn	N550 bn	7.38
2018	8.612 trn	N605.8 bn	7.03
Total	55.19 trn	N3.90	7.07

Source: Nigerian Budgetary Allocation (2009-2018)

Inadequate infrastructural facilities

As a result of the limited resources in the education sector, the issues of inadequate infrastructure like classrooms and furniture are issues of concern. Infrastructural facilities remain inadequate for coping with the rapidly growing number of children aspiring to go to school daily. The school environment is therefore generally not conducive for learning due to the physical condition of most schools. Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are in terrible condition with leaking roofs, cracked walls, no writing desks, no writing materials, no libraries, no laboratories, and no furniture for teachers to sit on. Some schools even go to the extent of asking students to provide their own tables and writing materials knowing that most of the pupils are poor and cannot provide these amenities. The poor funding of basic education has also lead to the inadequate maintenance of existing facilities and has also slowed down the process of building new facilities which cannot keep up with the increased enrolment of children. This definitely leads to overcrowded classrooms which make it difficult for children to assimilate due to the uncomfortable nature of the classrooms. The National Policy on Education prescribes that the teacher-pupil ratio should be 1:40 but practically, a lot of primary schools have operated with teacher pupil ratio of 1: 80 and above which can affect the attainment of quality education and primary school Social Studies objectives.

Qualified Teachers

What constitutes the quality of primary school education is based significantly on the type of the teacher education programme available for preparing primary school teachers. Therefore one of the problems faced by the primary schools in Nigeria is the poor quality of teachers produced from the various teacher training colleges. The Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) is the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. This means that no primary school teacher in Nigeria is expected to possess any teaching qualification lower than the NCE. This could be regarded as a bold move in order to improve the quality of teachers who will be able to impart the type of education the Nigerian children need. It is reported that 23% of the over 400,000 teachers employed in the nations primary schools do not possess the Teachers grade Two Certificate even when the NCE is said to be the minimum educational requirement an individual should possess to teach in the nations primary schools. This is definitely a challenge because the difficulty in transferring knowledge from the so called "half baked" teachers becomes an issue. This undermines the purpose of the provision of basic education because the government needs to train the required number and improve the quality of teachers needed to successfully implement the provision of basic quality education.

Poor remuneration of Teachers

Teacher's salaries have always been a cause of concern in the education sector. It is a known fact that the issue of improved remuneration is one of the biggest motivations for teachers the world over. Poor remuneration of teachers in the country has turned the teaching profession that used to be the envy of all into a profession of ridicule which youths are now skeptical of going into. Students no longer fancy education as a study course because the remuneration of public school teachers is poor. This situation impacts negatively on the smooth running of primary schools. The motivation and personal welfare of teachers as professionals can be described as very poor. It often takes the

Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) some days of work boycott in order to get primary school teachers paid whenever there is a salary delay. This has certainly affected the effective performance and morale of the teachers which therefore lowers the quality of education that is being passed down to the children. On several occasion teachers in different parts of the country have demonstrated their displeasure concerning neglect of the government to the plight of the teachers by embarking on strikes in order to make their intentions known. An example was the situation in Delta state where the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) in Delta State directed primary school teachers in the State to embark on an indefinite strike, complaining of what they called the Governments nonchalant attitude towards their welfare.

The teachers strike began after an ultimatum given to the State Government of Delta State to improve the welfare of teachers had lapsed. Also the nonpayment of the increased salary of primary school teachers had not been met. Another strike incident occurred in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory where Teachers boycotted their respective classroom because the teachers had not been paid the teachers monetization arrears for over six months. The remuneration of primary school teachers is very important in order to boost the motivation of teachers to effectively impart quality knowledge to the students. It is bad enough if teacher's salaries are said to be low, but when the low salaries are not paid on time or are left in arrears, it definitely agitates the teachers and dampens their morale to teach in the class rooms. It also affects the learners in the long run and therefore poses serious challenge to effective running of the Universal Basic Education Programme.

Conclusion

Nigeria in the last sixty years has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession. Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed nation when she is able to provide qualitative life in terms of quality education, improved health services, improved economy, poverty reduction, independent of the Judiciary, improved security where the masses lives and their properties are protected; improved political atmospheres as well as the rights of her citizen are guaranteed. Since no nation can rise above the quality of its education, it is pertinent therefore to put all efforts together to achieve quality education for sustainable development. However, since Primary education is the bedrock upon which all levels of education lies, it is imperative for emphasis on quality educational attainment because once the foundation(Primary School) is deficient all other levels of education after it to the University (tertiary levels) will be affected. In the light of the above, if the recommendations put forward in this paper are put into practice and implemented by the government, quality education and sustainable development can be attained as no nation can rise above the quality of its educational system.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions, the following recommendations are made;

- i. Administration, control and funding of primary education should be put under exclusive list with Federal government taking total responsibility over its administration.
- ii. An agency like TETFUND to be established for primary education and named as Primary Education Trust Fund (PETFUND) to cater for teachers welfare like training and other things that will bring about quality primary education in Nigeria.
- iii. Teacher's welfare in terms of salaries and allowances should be paid promptly without delay by the constituted authorities.
- iv. Special salary scale should be introduced by government for teachers in primary schools in Nigeria to enable them put in their best in inculcating the right type of attitudes and values for quality educational attainment and sustainable development in Nigeria
- v. Government should intensify efforts at all levels to improve on budgetary allocation to education sector as compared to the previous allocation that is far below UNESCO standard of 26% to enhance efficiency and teachers productivity for quality primary education to be attained
- vi. Incentive should be giving to hardworking and performing teacher inform of motivation to enhance teachers performance for quality education and sustainable development in Nigeria
- vii. Quality control and assurance unit should be strengthened at all levels of education particularly at the primary school to ensure quality education and sustainable development

- viii. Monitoring and evaluation of teachers should be giving priority attention to enable them put in their best in teaching and learning process in primary schools in Nigeria
- ix. Teachers recruitment should be based on meritocracy rather than favoritism to ensure efficiency quality education and sustainable national development to prevail
- x. Conducive learning environment should be provided for the learners in primary school to motivate and sustain their interest for quality educational attainmen

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