
REVIEW PAPER

ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS

Bola Abefe-Balogun.

The Federal Polytechnic, PMB 231, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The continual seasons of mass failure either in internal or external examinations by majority of pupils/students in public schools is worrisome in sane clime. This writer believes that elementary school level forms a stronger architectural foundation upon which secondary and tertiary levels academic learning outcomes are built. Although performance records of pupils/students in examinations conducted by both Universal Basic Examination Council and State Primary Education Boards are not accessible but those of West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) showed rising tide in students' abysmal performance. Contributory factors to poor academic performance include immaturity of pupil/student as a result of parent's pressure to have underage children in secondary or tertiary school level and by extension producing uncultured and timid graduates without needful knowledge, skill and character for gainful employment; poor expression skills, poor coverage of curriculum by teachers as well as carefree attitudes of government and some parents too. The fault is in the people who are not alive to their integrity and obligations. Why? Causes of poor academic performance and tips to excel in examinations were offered. Therefore the paper looks at the roles of stakeholders in achieving academic excellence, calling for collective saving actions and responsibilities to check the ugly trends because it takes a whole village to train a child.

KEYWORDS: Excellence, academic performance, examination, stakeholders, roles, school.

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Corresponding Author: abefebalogun@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Education in either informal or formal stage has to do with imparting knowledge, skills, moral and cultural values to keep man informed and associable to meet the challenges in the

society. It involves training, teaching and learning on the parts of the parents, teachers/instructors and the learners/trainees. Education is believed to be fundamentally important and crucial for the development of people and a nation with potentials. Child education is an investment to securing our best tomorrow today because “education has always been and will be the secret of success. Individuals and nations who took pains to educate themselves are clearly the powerful nations and powerful people in the world” (Azeeni, 2014). No wonder the fact that: “Education is often the largest and most important enterprise in most nations of the world. It touches the life of every individual, irrespective of his birth or status in society. It is one of the main concerns of every home, family and community. It is the top priority of governments, whether they are local, state or national. Even private agencies and organisations such as the church, (mosque), commercial firms and banks also join, at one level or another, in contributing towards the success of education” (Moses, 1981, 6) asserted. Ikuforiji (2014) said, “A country that failed to educate its youths and harness their potentialities should wait for its dooms day. The secret of development in any nation was in building young minds with requisite knowledge and skills.”

Education in every angle is the master key that could lock out ignorance, illiteracy, stagnation, backwardness, hunger and poverty but also could open door to better opportunities and progress in other fields of endeavours. “There is no gainsaying that the future of every nation and by extension the world is largely dependent on the youth, many of whom are children. Hence, it is important for a nation that indeed wants to grow, to make conscious efforts to provide a better future for them as the nation’s destiny lies in their hands” (Singh, 2014) remarked.

Unless we want to deceive ourselves and refuse to admit the realities of our situation, passing examination and obtaining certificate has been taken by students as the major aim of education. This should not be so. Good students do not only read/study to pass examinations and get certificates, but also to get practical knowledge, skills and character formation that would enable them face and take good control of life challenges. And also apply same to grab the best opportunities; solve business problems and contribute to enhanced manpower, developmental innovation and growth. “Without education your children can never really meet the challenges they will face. So it’s very important to give children education - the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Mandela quotes, 2012). Carson (1992, 201) opined, “One of the wonderful things about learning is that knowledge not only translates from one area to another but is also an avenue that leads to understanding and insight.” Children are being educated, as change agents, to enrich and impact the society and the world better than they met it by putting their feet on the part to becoming international super stars in the like of Philip Emeagwali, Professor Wole Soyinka, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Bill Gates, Barack Obama, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the late Nelson Mandela, etcetera.

The pursuit of rewards and fear of possible unemployment, hunger and poverty compel parents to investing in fast completion, finance based courses for their children/wards sometimes against the students interest, ability and capability. This I do know is a misplaced

goal. The crux of these discussions is the expected roles of parents, governments/proprietors, teachers, and students/pupils in achieving academic excellence.

The concept of excellence.

Excellence is achieving steady levels of comparable performances that exceed expectation and are higher than competitors could achieve. Academic excellence is the ability to perform with self-confidence make good effort and achieve top grade in academic activities. Achieving excellent academic performance begins with the parents who are the first contact persons to a child. Academic success is not achieved alone but with the best help gotten along the way from parents, teachers/instructors, guidance counsellors and mentors who sheared their talents as endowed by God. In the collection of fluid, every drop counts. Every segment of collaborated efforts by stakeholders in teaching/training/educating a child must count for celebrated result-excellence.

National development, political and technological progresses could only take place when there is functional improvement in the quality and products of Nigeria educational system. Technological development and breakthrough requires matching orientation and change in attitudes of the parents and students to pure science courses. Many students shun pure sciences (physics, chemistry and additional-mathematics) for social sciences and art courses such as Accountancy, Banking and Finance, Marketing, Political Science, Law, Business Management, etcetera on the premises to escape the dreaded mathematics and physics. But embraced shorter duration courses and the desire to make more money faster than what pure-sciences could enable them.

In South West of Nigeria, the government and parents realized that children without functional education or proper training were being insulted, abused and endangered species in the hands of unscrupulous, unmannered individuals. In order to check these ugly trends education was given deserved attention by providing quality education especially at the basic foundation as well as at the secondary and tertiary levels. One remarkable feature of the rapid growth in the number of private primary and secondary schools even universities in South West region is the corresponding rapid growth in population, desire for quality education and the number of both trained and untrained personnel for education industry. Teaching is a noble job to impact peoples' lives and make positive contributions to the development of a nation and the world. It assisted in moulding lives for the advancement of the society. A good teacher does not think for but guides pupils/students to be creative thinkers, visualizing images and events and match them reasonably for gainful results. A teacher must be passionate, hardworking and resourceful person.

However teaching career has, sort of, become either a *comfort zone or free-trade-zone* for uninspired and decrepit individuals to elude joblessness. Taking advantage of saturated labour market with unemployed youths, most of whom do not have soft/saleable skills, the private schools entrepreneurs (proprietors) and some arms of government recruited from these zones a large number of manpower for a stipend. The resultant increases in the number of gate-crashers (certificated illiterates/quacks) personnel in education industry resulted to higher failure rate among the pupils/students in school and external examinations as well as

drop in the quality and standard of education and by extension the graduates from tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is very degrading that large percent of students in public secondary schools find it difficult in self-expression just as some graduates of polytechnics, colleges of education and universities could not take minutes of meetings or reports of events correctly.

Teachers do have negative challenges among the following to contend with their employers, especially the private proprietors simply referred to as education entrepreneurs (edupreneurs).

- Poor implementation of State Teaching Service Commission's policies such as Teacher Special Salary (TSS).
- Poor career prospect and weak status.
- Lack of opportunities for sponsored or self-development programmes. Professor Olufemi Bamiro, ex-Vice Chancellor of University of Ibadan, in an interview with the Nation (2012), said that "teachers must be trained and exposed to new techniques of teaching just as they are expected to be abreast of changes in their specialities. Even in the universities, the lecturers need to be updated on new developments and trained on new techniques in their respective fields because knowledge is not static." It is really dynamic.
- Hot organizational climate and poor quality working life make some teachers hate the job.
- Poor recognition of achievement, and undervalue of teachers worth resulting to care-free attitudes, apathy and job dissatisfaction.

When job dissatisfaction sets in, a worker becomes frustrated, less committed, hostile, careless and less productive. In short he/she turns a militant to colleagues and pupils. Surely pupils would not get the expected stuff of knowledge, while parents and proprietors could lose interest, trust and confidence in him/her. Job dissatisfaction and brain drain among seasoned and industrious teachers/scholars has some ill effects on the national development. If they (teachers) were not motivated commensurately towards being committed and patriotic workers the end result, as usual, would be nothing more than mass production of unskilled, incompetent and indolent labour force.

In an interview with Adeniji (2013), Pa Vincent Ntinu, a retired teacher remarked that: "The teaching profession is no longer attractive because of lack of motivation for teachers. Some of those who are into it are doing it because they have no better option. Teachers are no longer motivated. That's why I did not bother to encourage them (my children) in that line. I wanted the children to study courses that would help them to be comfortable." According to Adeyanju (2014), "While primary school teacher in the United State of America and England enjoy a monthly salary of \$3,000 (₦480,000) and £2,500 (₦655,000) respectively, the counterpart in Nigeria earns less than \$160 (₦20,000)." However "when too few persons choose to be teachers, the education of the whole generation may suffer. When too many

persons prepared for a few popular professions and fail to find employment, precious human assets are wasted, and powerful future leaders begin to wander about the political and economic system under which they live” (Oyebiyi, 2014).

Reasons for quitting teaching job among others are demoralising situations such as irregular/delayed salaries; delayed promotion, lack of on-the-job training and employer-sponsored capacity development programmes, societal apathy as well as unhealthy organisational climate in private and public schools. However a good teacher needs to be cheerful, good tempered, well-mannered and polite. He/she must be patient, kind, understanding and sympathetic. Frankly speaking teaching is not for the faint-hearted, but for those willing to work hard passionately and take a chance so that lofty dreams and aspirations of parents, pupils/students and the government could come true. If everybody would be a banker, journalist, engineer, astronaut, pilot, lawyer or doctor, who would teach the would-be doctors, pilots, lawyers, accountants, engineers and other scientists, etcetera.

*No teacher no knowledge/skills;
No administrators/diplomats,
No transfer of technology,
No development,
No scientists,
No nation!*

STAKEHOLDERS ROLES

The roles of the stakeholders remain largely on providing quality personnel, good learning materials and infrastructures; conducive environment for learning and recreation, supporting one another and counselling the students/pupils. Children/wards must be well informed on how and why they have to read/study because a not well informed person or group is deformed. Proprietors could sign memorandum of understanding (MOU) with faculties of education in universities and or colleges of education in Nigeria for human capacity building on teaching methodology, tests administration and evaluation, guidance and counselling to enrich workers’ productivity and services delivery. We should build confidence in our children/wards/students to succeed not only in examinations but also life. Though, it looks expensive but worth the deals to have all-round developed, educated, skilled, passionate and successful youngsters needed to fast drives national development for better tomorrow.

Parents’ Roles.

The home is the first place of human contact and the foundation of learning, from where pre-school trainings were received. It therefore requires a great deal of parents in not only being good models/mentors but also understand their children well and above expectation. This would help at moulding the youngsters’ behaviours, characters, habits, morals and attitudes and the right path to a successful self-reliant and purposeful living. Whatever the claims of the educationists, however, the academic/career preparation of the children remains primarily that of parents. We must not shirk that, please. Parents are to provide conducive atmosphere to enable the children explore the world as their needs and desires dictated because neither of the parents nor the children could perform at premium when the home front was not

conducive to healthy living and or studying. With parents' aids, the chance of a life of meaning and purpose would be brighter or rather achieved.

Setting young people on the right path in academic/career is like launching a ship; there are difficulties and risks. These might be reduced with proper preparation, but even when the vessel is safely bobbing on the surface of the water much remains to be done before she could be accounted seaworthy. Parents must be alive to their responsibilities for better up-bringing of the children and invest heavily in quality education for them to become useful change agents for development of the society/world. Nevertheless, young pupils do look for some kind of pointers from parents. If they don't accept your advice then that is their privilege and you must not complain. It is a worthless exercise to compel a child into studying a particular field such as medicine, law, engineering, accountancy, etcetera, having understood from all available records and observations that the boy or girl concerned has little or no interest, ability, willingness and capacity in the forced chosen career.

Agreeably, though most parents do want the best for their children but it is not surprising if motives sometimes become a little mixed, especially in the case of an ambitious and capable child whose eagerness to climb the ladder of success might land his parents to fear he would leave them behind – *ibiti agba wa, ni omode nba (Yoruba adage)*. This could be a very real threat where a parent feels insecure about his own status or way of life and might affect a father who wanted his own to join him in his own business, just as much as another who expected his daughter/son to take a job alongside him at the firm where he had worked all his days. Ambitious children deserve encouragement. They would soon find out how realistic you were. And if they look set to do better than you ever dreamed, be proud of them.

Never make a hash of things to the detriment of their choice and right, knowing fully that youngsters in their teens do not readily accept what their parents tell them on career choice, or their parents' way of doing things. Parents/teachers as therapists should see a child/pupil/student as a client expressing his/her feelings and to help him/her explore the deeper feelings that lie behind the words, and help the child/student to the stage where he/she could make his/her own decisions and be independent. Counselling aims at helping people to help themselves. At this juncture I call on parents whose children have any goal at all, and perhaps even if they suspect a child has none, to give them the benefit of doubt so that they do not get frustrated or depressed.

First and foremost parents should at all-time endeavour to give children balance food (having more of fish, fruits, nuts and vegetables) to keep the children healthy because reading on empty stomach affects retention and performance. Sugary products, junk food (highly processed drinks and foods, high-fat, fasten and fried) are known to “interfere with ability to learn, affect the behaviour and the cognitive functioning of the brain due to the chemical that causes hyperactivity, both in children and in adults” (The Punch, 2014).

Parents/teachers should seek to understand their wards/students than to be understood by developing listening skills, and thinking before acting so as to promote good relationship. Parents and teachers should help their wards/pupils to prioritize goals to maximize potentials.

Early to bed is early to rise. Medicalnewstoday (2014) linked, “Too much sleep as 10 hours or more and too little as 6 hours or less to chronic diseases.” Enough sleep enables you to function at optimum level.

Parents should make going to school more exciting, interesting and enjoyable for their children/wards. Carson (1990, 32) praised his mother saying: “Her constant interest and unflagging encouragement kept me motivated on my studies.” This singular act of love changed him from a dummy to one of the best neuron surgeon consultants in the United States of America. “I do not believe in saving the world at the expense of family. The children are our greatest assets; the future generation and they must not be neglected” (Roberson, 2010). But do not over pamper them simply that the people with the toughest backgrounds are the ones with the greatest capacity for achieving sustainable success. Ogunbadejo (2014), Sosanya (2013) and Carson (1992, 17) advised parents to regulate television viewing, and mobile devices using hours for their children to avoid them becoming highly addicted to our mesmerising technological fixes which could result to obese and bad stress that kill. It’s distractive and a time waster.

Encourage good reading habit in your children/wards because it improves vocabulary and comprehension as prerequisites for strong academic performance. Do motivate them at reading, doing homework and submitting same within allotted time. Monitor your children/wards academic performance; give encouraging support and not inducing teachers. Provide awards and incentives for high achievement and improvement (Just as being done during the prizes giving ceremony in schools). Madike (2010) remarked thus: “My parents showered me with a lot of love, made me to have confidence, made me fearless, made me believe in myself, have faith in my abilities and sharpened my survival instincts too. My father taught me as a kid that personality is made up of ability and capability.”

Governments’ and Proprietors’ Roles

Teachers are fountains and transmitters of knowledge to other professions. Therefore they need being encouraged to make their jobs as long life profession and have pride in it. It would never be out of place if they are paid relatively higher than other counterparts in the other professions. However, they must be ready to render selfless services and be devoted to duties.

A skillful man/woman is a mobile and worthy asset that must be adequately catered for as a resource that needs better maintenance and proper utilization than ever been for desired profitable result. Thus, it is a worthy effort and the costs expended on providing workers with adequate welfare services for the return of their improved morale, loyalty and better performance. Welfare package includes every goodness either in cash or kind done an employee by his/her employer such that improved conditions of labour are reached and eliminate inequalities among workers who performed the same work; motivate or stimulate long-term employment.

Human resources are the best assets money could not buy but most expensive to maintain, love, cherish and retain when hired. Undoubtedly, to ensure competence and steady effectiveness, people at work must be treated

fairly and justly; well managed and motivated to put in their best possible for the success of the school business. It is my belief that the proprietors would treat each and every member of staff equally, fairly and justly, as they would have been treated in a well-organized concern, to motivate and retain an efficient staff capable of contributing towards the growth and success of our public and private schools. All the tiers of government and other proprietors are honestly enjoined to recognize their workers' worth; provide them with adequate welfare package and services that would not only positively affect performance but motivate a worker who eventually, if not cared for, becomes an economic burden as quality work performed needs to be redone or rejected.

The Nation (2012) quoted Professor Olufemi Bamiro as saying: "Serious attention should be paid to teachers' welfare as well as the tool that they will work with. This will enable them to concentrate on what they are doing. What is coming as incentive such as salary for the teachers is nothing to write about; so, they look elsewhere for something to augment." Equally of serious concern, are the problems of finance and shortage of qualified, skilled and passionate teachers in schools? "Many states in this country do not have enough qualified teachers even for the primary schools let alone the secondary schools. Even those states which may currently have enough qualified teachers available for primary school teaching cannot afford to employ them because of the poor and precarious financial situation of those states" (Fagbamiye, 1987, 74-79). It is quiet embarrassing and shameful that the underfunding of education and poor remunerations for teachers kept dragging for the past 28 years and still counting. Thanks to the bail-out funds granted to many States in the year 2015 by President Muhammadu Buhari to settle unpaid salaries to civil servants larger percent of who are teachers.

Majority of the school children according to Professor Jide Osuntokun's (2015) commentary are "taught by tired, underpaid, or unpaid bedraggled teachers who in their frustration and anger inflict corporal punishment with little or no provocation on the unfortunate young children who are too scared to complain or report the harassment to their parents." The efforts of some state governors such as Rochas Okorocha of Imo State and Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola of the State of Osun towards restructuring/revolutionizing education is exemplarily commendable. Despite the dearth of funds governor Aregbesola is building and delivering state-of-the-art 100 elementary schools, 50 middle schools and 20 high schools with world-class-based quality structures, infrastructures and facilities (well-equipped and staffed electronic libraries, laboratories as well as Olympic size sports arena) needed for building excellent teaching, learning and behavioural capacities and skills in teachers and students. Also, he is the only governor in Nigeria running home grown school feeding (O-Meal) programme which had endeared the state to World Bank Assisted programmes, British and Nigeria Federal Governments. Abefe-Balogun (2014, 19-32) asserted: "Apart from creating multifaceted wealth opportunities for thousands of food vendors/cooks, farmers and other agro-allied entrepreneurs, O-Meal programme boosted enrolment into elementary one from 170,000 pupils in year 2010 to 304,000 pupils in year 2013."

Good pay policy: Low salary levels, according to Pyke (2003, 14) have traditionally been the main stay of conference discussions and certainly drove the militancy of the early and mid-eighties when teachers found themselves substantially behind other public sector workers.”

In spite of introducing TSS pay remains a significant issue, particularly in private schools in Nigeria. The established TSS should be implemented as a motivating factor to attract, encourage and retain capable, qualified and experienced hands/staff. It is not just enough to create jobs for people but people for Jobs. In order to ensure competence and steady effectiveness people at work, most especially teachers, must be treated fairly, justly well managed and motivated to put in their best possible for the success of the students, schools and the state.

Schools need be made vital and functional so that learners could take on them as their own, identify with them; be free in them, participate in school activities and see the pupils as partners in progress even as alumni. This is mainly to provide pupils/students with opportunities in tapping and developing their talents to win academic laurels and to check droppings out of school. Then they would have sense of belonging, ready to come to school, read and participate actively in class works and other learning activities.

Another very important role expected of the government/proprietor is that teachers employed should not be treated as robots that need only being programmed to work. Rather teachers should be treated individually as employees having certain needs, particularly, need to have a clear understanding of their roles and how they fit within the organizations structure; the need to be given the opportunity to participate in the determination of their performance expectations and promotion; the need to be informed regularly and constantly, in advance, of changes which affect their relationship with the organization and the performance of their duties, and the need to feel adequately rewarded, in accordance with the objectives and understood appraisal system which gives due recognition to accomplishment.

It is common knowledge that many teachers would really want to enrich their job satisfaction base on full appreciation for work done; regular merited promotion and advancement; interesting and conducive workplace environment and working conditions, and tactful discipline and warm organizational climate at all times. All required of the government and proprietors is to improve and promote teaching professionalism by encouraging self-development programmes, organizing seminars and or workshops regularly, and approving study leave with or without pay for those who deserved such reward. The Punch (2011) in its editorial opinion wrote: “These teachers should be subject to periodic training and retraining to keep them abreast of modern trends and teaching techniques.” Such training updates would not only drive efficiency and competence in service delivery but also participative teaching, learning and understanding to improve students’ performance in class work and examinations. There must be other good conditions of service, job placement, worthy recognition with corresponding awards for the teachers earthly benefits.

Teachers' Roles

Teachers are so important that sometimes we cannot do without them but we cannot do without their services. Like a skilled porter they mould, shape and fine-tune pupils behaviour attitudes and somehow, their life. *Bi a ba yin ireke to dun, o ye ka yin etiodo to tihu* - (Yoruba adage) meaning that if we praise the sugar cane for its sweetness, so we should the riverbank as well. A good teacher must know a great deal about the subject he/she is teaching and give interesting lessons after which he would mark and record learners' work justly and regularly.

A teacher's effort would be appreciated if he/she assumed an essentially intellectual and instrumental role, and carrying out the primary tasks effectively. A good teacher needs to be cheerful, good tempered, well-mannered and polite. He/she must be patient, understanding, kind and sympathetic because students value lucid exposition, clear statement of problems and guide in the solution.

Students/pupils are influenced more by what they see than by what they hear. *Tell me, I forget; show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand* – (Chinese proverb). Lead them through necessary guide, exemplary conduct, direct contact and precedence to boost their morale and interest. They are better managed with loving words, actions, deeds and good attitude and, not only with money and hard fist. A child/pupil/student needs the warmth of commendation.

Counsel students to avoid taking to courses or careers after friends but influenced by their own personal interests, capacities, values and opportunities. Advise students not to admit failure as an end but a means to better end. Every student/pupil wants self-fulfilment. "It is not what happens to you that determines how far you go in life, it is what you do with what happens to you" – ZigZiglar (2014).

CAUSES OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The following factors could cause pupils/students to score low in class works or examinations.

- Inadequate qualified science and technology teachers in schools. Societal apathy and poor treatment of teachers among other public servants is not attractive to the youths. Fagbamiye (1987, 74-79) lamented: "Since we do not have enough qualified teachers even for the convectional secondary schools and little has been done to date to produce the highly-skilled technical and science teachers needed for the new programmes, this problem is perhaps the most serious constraint to the successful implementation of the new (*National Policy on Education*) programme." This often results to work overload for the few available teachers' couple with larger number of students, administration of tests and public examinations as well as working for more tasks and other responsibilities.
- Inadequate preparation for class works by teachers and students.
- Poor studying and time management skills, and habits.

- Poor and negative attitude to reading and doing homework. It is open secret that pupils/students misuse and abuse smart phones ignorantly promoting negative attitudes to active learning, poor preparations for class works and examinations. Instead of using the devices for gainful research and learning, students watch videos/films, ping and chat endlessly not only during lectures but also late in the nights – aimlessly extra-cooling to memory loss, fatigue and failure. Instead of wilfully wasting time, use same devices/gadgets to research more on the course of study to wide your knowledge frontiers through visual e-learning, e-library, e-books and other lot of relevant information available free on the internet. Make this a pattern of academic life.
- Lack of clear goals set to achieve.
- Learning disabilities/memory lapses e.g. forgetting to do assignment or taking to study schedules.
- Unhealthy personal sleeping and eating habits.
- Poor physical and mental health caused by stress or unhealthy habits.
- Lack of motivation and incentives from parents and teachers.
- Keeping bad association/group. Do not associate with or keep bad friends who could influence you negatively. Bad company/friends corrupt good manners. A seasoned actress Barbara Soky (2007) was quoted as saying: “If you are keeping wrong friends, you go the wrong direction; you will derail because the wrong association you are keeping is wrong. And wrong association is the worst thing that can happen to anyone.” And that: “If you run with wolves you will learn how to howl. But, if you associate with eagles, you will learn how to soar to great heights” (Mason, 2000) observed.

Tips to Excel

It should be noted that intellectual development include all social, cultural practices, moral and recreational aspects of life to reach one’s potential intellectually. Students must be made to know why they are studying by, among others, making courses interesting, meaningful and valuable. Having all human and material resources at their disposal they must set for themselves higher standard than anybody else would do. Like the tortoise, Iyanam (2014) advised that, “We must learn to work strategically and steadily towards our desired goals. This is achievable by setting smart goals, and constantly mapping our environment to identify opportunities for advancement and threat to our ambitions.” Drive yourselves to see how much you could do. Because “there were many things I considered as distractions, so I kept to my studies and it helped me regain my confidence that I could be the best again” (Wande-Kayode, 2014). Therefore, “You who wish to excel always aim one degree higher than the goal you have set for yourself: faster, higher, and stronger” –The Olympic Motto (United Parcel Service, 1996).

- i. Having put God first in your studies, attitudes and dealings, the following other factors would assist students/pupils to make readings and academic activities interesting, enjoyable and excel in academic and life.

- ii. Leave your comfort zone for a worthy cause because if there is no pain, no gain; no sweat, no sweet. If the fry pan is not heated up, the corns cannot pop. Success requires hard work, determination and sacrifice. There is sweetness in bitter-leaf at the end.
- iii. Study in a quiet regular place at a regular time to reduce distractions, promote concentration and maximize your efforts. Attend every class prepared: Be mentally alert and ready whenever in the classroom/library; be attentive in listening, ask relevant questions and participate actively in class discussions.
- iv. Review your class work, do your assignments, if any, and study the first of next day lessons before retiring to bed/night sleep.
- v. Use your time wisely; take notes and review them continuously to improve better understanding. Whenever you decide to read for a longer hours, remember to short break to revitalize yourself and to prevent boredom and fatigue. Therefore, take short breaks every one or two hours and change lecture notes/course because variety enhances reading efficiency and assimilation.
- vi. Set realistic and attainable goals: Goal setting helps a setter to move forward with courage, rather than going backward. Once you have a goal in mind, work hard and smart to achieve it without being distracted. Avoid the '*could haves*' and the '*should haves*' rather look ahead with great vision and mission. So you must be purposeful and future focused because lack of productive purpose could be resentful.
- vii. Give yourself to those things, in and outside school, that produce fruitful results. Your attitude to studies, peers, teachers and parent should be one of excellence and productive.
- viii. Associate with/keep good friends who are focused, real and truthful having passion for their studies and could add tangible values to your life through positive influences. Identify with like-minded mates; work with them to improve your learning and performances. You must know and be yourself. No one could be real you because you have unique ways of seeing and doing things; have unique tendencies, standards and goals in your studies and life than someone else's.
- ix. Understand your interest, likes and dislikes; zeal and capability based on renewed vision and passion as well as family values. You have got to be the architect of your life for your own good because the struggles for academic excellence, socio-economic and moral standards continue for the liberation from the limits of mediocrity, mental slavery, hunger and poverty.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made to view the roles of stakeholders in achieving academic excellence. Thus we should do all we could to make learning enjoyable, exciting, and above all rewarding for children/wards/students by taking the account of their natural interest, capabilities, and have their motivation directed to worthwhile ends, self-confidence and self-reliance. If it is our aim to offer best-value education for our children, especially in the elementary and secondary levels, then it becomes imperative that through parents and teachers association (PTA), alumni, and philanthropic gestures we work proactively in partnership with government, proprietors and corporate entities to achieve collective desirous

goals. The serial refusal of the Nigeria government to prioritise 26 percent of financial budget for education must be addressed decisively and implemented with strengthened human willpower fully in year 2016 budget and beyond. Every elementary and secondary school especially the public ones should be made a fast-selling brand with enviable goodwill that must be jealously protected and continually projected. Our national curriculum development, implementation and offerings must help meet the changing needs in today's national and global marketplaces.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all pupils/students in public elementary/secondary schools whose right to good care and quality education had been/is being abused, denied, neglected, or willfully abandoned 'home alone or school alone' by parents/guardians and/or teachers.

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