

**An address by the Director Senior Secondary schools, Federal Ministry of Education, Hajia Binta Abdulkadir at the one-day Stakeholders Town Hall Meeting on the Hurried Child, organized by the Mothers Love initiative at BON Hotel Elvis, Abuja on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022.**

I am delighted to welcome you and to give a keynote address on this auspicious occasion of the one day Stakeholders, Town Hall meeting on the Hurried Child Syndrome.

I have been reliably informed that this stakeholders meeting have been packaged by the Mothers Love Initiative, a non-governmental organization, in commemoration of the celebration of the World Day for the prevention of child abuse. This meeting is also meant to sensitize the society on the ills of the Hurried Child Syndrome from the Nigerian perspective. This meeting is therefore expected to provide a gauge on the level of awareness, the perception of various relevant stakeholders and what they can offer by the way of intervention in advocating for measures to stop the syndrome as well as providing support to victims.

The Hurried Child syndrome is a common bug among the elite class. It is a process of transforming their children from childhood to adulthood overnight by skipping the process of natural growth.

The practice of children skipping classes based on a rigorous academic scrutiny or overage consideration is not new in the educational sphere. However the recent trend in the practice, places it on the status of an acceptable norm, rather than an exception. Today, most pupils transit from primary five or even primary four to junior secondary school 1. This leaves most schools without the primary six class. This unhealthy trend is also found in the senior secondary school where students in senior secondary school SS1 and SS2 sit for terminal and university entrance

examinations. They are propelled by their parents desire and impatience. This is what is called the Hurried Child syndrome. This is a reflection, in some instance, of the misconception of the interpretation of the Nigerian Educational system (6-3-3-4).

The situation also brings to fore the gradual erosion of the basic essence of education in Nigeria today. The lack of attention to the full delivery of the primary school curriculum with the absence of primary six(6) compromises the child's opportunity to acquire the full complements, knowledge, skills, emotional, physical and moral development as prescribed in the curriculum.

### **What are the implications of the Hurried Child Syndrome?**

The drive by parents and schools to hurry children through schools is more counter productive than productive. Studies have shown that the age a child starts school could affect his/her attendance and graduation rate. . Studies by the United States National Bureau revealed that older students do better than younger class mates. This means that the drive to rush children through school could be counter-productive as it does not ensure proper and thorough Learning sequences that will fulfill the Learning outcomes as envisaged in the three domains (cognitive, affective and psycho-social).

In addition, the practice of rushing children also distorts and affects the child's mental memory processing system, as well as psycho-social development process.

Rushing children to be wonder-kids even before they can walk can cause undue stress with its attendant devastating effects. Since rushed children are made to pass through adulthood related stress, they in turn begin to exhibit adult stress and related health and adult - related delinquent behaviour. Most of them end up as underachievers instead of academic prodigy envisaged by their parents. Some also subsequently become

anxiety - ridden and end up with sleep disorder, suicide, depression, drug and crime.

Let me emphasize here that the significance of starting primary school at age six (6) and spending six years in primary school is globally established.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the phenomenon of rushed children has remained with us because of the weak regulatory enforcement of the National Policy on Education as well as the lack of sensitization on the negative impact of the practice on the child and the society. It is in the light of the foregoing that I urge Quality Assurance Agencies and Practitioners to be up and doing in tackling this menace.

On behalf of the Honourable Minister of Education, I congratulate the Mothers Love Initiative for packaging this programme and for drawing the attention of Nigerians to the menace of the Hurried Child Syndrome. This is the right step in the right direction.

### **Conclusion**

Let me once again reiterate and charge parents and Stakeholders to please allow their children to grow up naturally. Do not rush them or force them to skip classes or the process no matter how brilliant you think they are. Academic excellence is not enough, let them mature. Let them grow through the process, no matter how gifted they are so as not to damage their future. Permit me to conclude using the advice of Dr. David Elkind author of **The Hurried Child**:

*Parents and schools should let children be children because pupils are more likely to have academic success if they are not hurried through their early childhood, as the practice overestimate their competence and over expose them academic pressures.*

Thank you.