

ACTUALISING THE UBE CURRICULA THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) initiated by the Federal Government received a boost on the 30th September, 1999 with an official launching. This paper is written from the dimension of advocating for effective community participation as an appropriate support system towards the actualization of the UBE curricular. It equally gave an insight of the UBE programme as well as a review of Community participation in education vis-a-vis the scope and importance of the role of Community in educational attainment. The paper also looks at the rationale for Community participation in Education. The position of this paper is that since the government alone cannot and has not been able to fund education equitably, there becomes an obvious need for Community to be involved in the funding of the new programme of education through the provision of basic infrastructural facilities, decision-making, manpower support, etc as this will strengthen the implementational tempo of the new education culture.

Introduction

"Education is regarded as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. In appreciation of this fact, Nigerian Government regards it as a huge government venture that requires its complete and dynamic intervention and active participation (NPE, 1981). It is premised on the above role of education that the Federal Government decided to launch the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme as a solid subtraction for subsequent national development.

According to NPE (1981), the only way of achieving the Nation's national objectives is through education as a tool. There is no policy on education that can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the Nation as embodied in the second National Development Plan which includes:

- a free and democratic society;
- a just and equalitarian society;
- a united, strong and self-valiant nation;
- a great and dynamic economy
- a land of bright and full opportunities

Having identified the five national philosophy and objectives, the Federal Government decided to adopt the UBE programme as the first among other options towards achieving the above objectives.

It is in the light of the above that this paper examined the version of Community participation as an adequate support system for actualising the pet programme of the Federal Government.

To further understand this paper, it is imperative to highlight more on the concept of participation. The idea that a balance and equitable development can only be achieved with the participation of the population in both the decision-making processes and provision of infrastructural facilities is becoming increasingly acceptable (An HEP Staff Group 1981).

Participation is fostered from different dimensions. From the dimension of planning, it means the right of all concerned by a change to take part in its processes from the stage of pre-planning, planning and decision-making to those of implementation and evaluation. One may view real participation as the active and responsible association of the people in the decision-making processes that concerned them. In the context of this paper, participation is considered as a means of increasing efficiency by the mobilization of new resources as an instrument for the achievement of specific desirable goals and objectives. More directly, participation also refers to a means of increasing the sense of commitment for a reform programme instead of passive acceptance.

In their further survey of educational reforms at the local level, an HEP Staff Group (1981) stated that in some countries there are already the necessary structures and channels of participation which may be used for the purpose meant. In others, generating participation in educational reforms require considerable effort to create ad hoc channels or institution within which participation can effectively take place. However, some groups may already exist, such as teacher organizations, women's groups, young peoples' group, village governance bodies, teachers' centres, school industry consultative committees and parent. Teacher Associations. Since educational reforms are of many different types, one would not expect the same kind of participation to be appropriate for each type of reform. In addition, educational reforms normally proceed through a cycle of stages from conceptualisation to summative evaluation. Similarly, the type of participation appropriate to each stage may vary as well. For the UBE type of reform, the all-embracing type is recommended. It involves participation in decision-making provision of basic infrastructural facilities, curricular design, etc to cushion the smooth actualization of the new education culture.

An Insight into the UBE Programme

When on the 30th September, 1999 President Olusegun Obasanjo launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the universalisation of Basic Education is in keeping with the requirement of the constitution of the Federal Republic Nigeria (1999) which according to the implementation Guidelines of the Universe Basic Education identifies the educational objectives as stated is as follows:

Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.

Government shall as and when practicable provide:

- free compulsory and Universal Primary Education
- free secondary education; and
- free University Education; and
- free adult literacy programme.

To Omoogun (2000), the Universal declaration of basic education as an important development that is late than never. By implication, the new education programme is coming up much too late, ten years after "World conference on Education For All and Framework For Action (WCEFA) held in Jomtlen, That and | between the 5th to 9th March, 1990. The package from the outcome of that conference became a sort of blue print for all countries of the world and Nigeria was encouraged to step up educational activities to achieve education for all. One of such activities was the situation and policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria carried out nation-wide from 1991 - 1993 (Denga, 2000).

This is *a* right step in the right direction as education is a veritable tool through which nations navigate their social and economic development. With the new programme soon to come on board, by October, 2000, many questions have been raised than answers can be provided. Analysts are of the view that Obasanjo is trying to save his face from the dismal performance of his Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme. Many too have detected

the fundamental problems that ruined the UPE. It appears if the entire stakes of the UBE are from the UPE and doubts have been cast and serious questions raised. Areas of doubt are lack of adequate planning to facilitate the take-off of the programme, lack of sufficient teachers to service the programme, no teachers trained in readiness for UBE, lack of infrastructure like classroom buildings, sitting desks, equipment and instructional materials are not being provided for in readiness for a smooth take-off of the UBE programme.

Still on the prospects of the UBE, Omoogun (2000) states that the current and persistent crises in our educational system question the legitimacy and feasibility of the UBE. Advancing further, he said that "majority of our public primary schools have completed their cycles and are completely dead". With the first phase implementation programme of the UBE soon to flag up-most schools are still in shape that inimical to teaching and learning. What kind of basic education are we talking about? We are still far from reality. The UPE when introduced, not this kind of publicity and suddenly died because proper structures were not put in place. Any wing hastily done is always wrongly done and requires a long time and resources for it to be properly done.

The Scope and Importance of the Role of Community Participation in Public Education

There have been clarion calls for major stake holders in education to be involved so as to facilitate educational development. In yielding to the above call, most communities have already played and are still playing prominent roles in our public education either in the advisory capacity, provisions of infrastructures, implementation or curriculum design.

Adiele (1971) on the role of Community Councils in public education reports that between the months of September, and December, 1974 in Amucha Community in Nkwerre Division, over 30 different communities in the state had accepted to pay their children's school fees in primary schools. The sum of about 112,360 was voted by Amucha Community

to that effect. Moreso, Ogberuru community in Mgbido Division awarded scholarship to all their primary school children in 1970. Umolulu Community in Okigwe Division also announced a similar measure for all their children for 1970. Bende Community in Berde Division raised ₦1,000 out of target of ₦3,000 towards the fees of their primary school children. Advancing further, that in 1971 still, several communities had launched scholarship schemes for all the primary schools in their areas just to mention a few-Nsirim and Umuako, Bende, Ihitte Izinihotte community in Mbaise and Ogbunka communities all in different Division had introduced free primary education for their children.

The first section of Community participation in education is mainly on the financial inputs of commodities towards actualising education of their children. From the perspective of in school by communities, their involvement cannot be ever-emphasised. In Cross River State, various communities have articulated and aggregated resources for the purpose of providing classroom buildings to cushion the take-off of their community schools since the government alone cannot provide. The increased number of schools in Cross River State today is attributed to high level community participation in public education. Example of such community efforts includes the former community secondary school, Orimekpong.

On further provision of infrastructures, same in Boki, quite a good number extension primary schools have been built and desks provided through community efforts just to bring primary education to door steps to encourage high attendance rate by children that ordinarily would not have been able to start school due to distance.

As one can see from the above, these effects are purely voluntary, sometimes emotional, less foresighted and in most cases uncoordinated and quite irregular and diffuse. What we need is an effective local machinery to stimulate, promote motivate channel, maintain and sustain these efforts. Indeed we need a regular administrative machinery of

revenue collection at the local level. This will quarrantee that what is levied or assumed' for educational purpose, call it education rate is not only pinch but also well spent (Adiele, 1971)

The social role played by communities in public education is highly appreciative. Communities should invest in education because of the social benefit they gained from it in the form or identification, co-operation, understanding and acceptance. The school expects the community to stand by it and protect it and also to interpret its philosophy, its traditions and its aspirations. This is why we say that "the school is a project in community government and the community a programme in institutional setting". While the business of the school is education, education is the business of the community and through enlightened community council giving the necessary leadership, one expects the school plants, the school grounds, library, buildings, halls and evening classes to serve not only the educational needs of the children of the community but also the social, civic, cultural and recreational needs of the community.

In his appraisal of current stimulants of community participation in public education, Fantini (1972) cited rising educational cost, poor quality education in schools, dissatisfaction with standard school programmes, dehumanizing effect of formed education, and the need for accountability. He further identified the following modes for involving the community in educational decision-making seems to have emerged recently and could, if utilised particularly in Nigeria bridge the gap between the "TOWN" and the "grown".

(1) Consultative

With this approach, school officials make a point of conferring with various community organisations, groups and individuals before making a decision, which remains with the professionals.

(2) Advisory

Many schools have or could form community advisory councils as they interact on a regular basis. School officials could be saddled with the final decision-making function, on matters affecting the community.

(3) Shared

Under this pattern, professionals and consumers have equal voice in shaping policy. This usually includes equal representations of lay-men and professionals or some governing structure. Decisions are arrived at by consensus.

(4) Community Control

This pattern shifts the bulk of decision-making authority to the layman.

(5) Individual or Family Control

This pattern views an individual and/or the family as the ultimate sector of the type of education which suits them.

Rationale for Community Participation

Anwukah (1992) advanced the following as advocacy of increased community involvement in schools are usually stated in terms of the effect of community involvement.

1. Educational Achievement

Parents and educators share an interest in the achievement of the child. Increased student achievement seems to be associated with the increased parental involvement. However, according to Mann (1974) there is no evidence that the level of parents participation in school is related to students' achievement. With this note of caution, however, he feels that "there is more positive opinion about the desirability of this argument for community involvement than there is about any other argument for community involvement", (p : 280).

2. Institutional Responsiveness

It is believed that increasing community involvement makes educational institutions more responsive to the interests of the people they serve. Community members and administrators seem to agree in rhetoric that schools should be responsive but this argument often dissolves when the community wishes to effect a change not desired by the school. Responsiveness as a value is more widely held by community members than by school administrators.

3. Support For The Institutions

This argument is based on the tenets that participation in the determination of policies of the school by community members increased commitment to the educational objectives and programmes of the schools.

Conclusion

The new education culture in Nigeria today is in consonance with Universal declaration of education for all. All through experience, government alone has not been able to adopt the option of calling on major stake holders, particularly communities, to participate in the sponsorship of the UBE programme which is closer to communities. Moreover, most communities have been directly involved in running their community primary and secondary schools. If such efforts are encouraged, motivated, sustained and co-ordinated, communities will have a sense of belonging and the actualization of the UBE programme through community participation becomes easily facilitated. It is in the light of this that the role of community in public education cannot be undermined.

Recommendations

For the success of the UBE programme, this paper recommends the following:

1. A full scale composition of the UBE programme commission that will oversee, run, co-ordinate and ensure the successful implementation of the programme;

2. A vigorous mobilization and sensitization of the public on the expectations and the gains of the new reduction culture.
3. Effective community involvement and participation to enhance the actualization of the UBE programme;
4. Intensive renovation of out-of-shape schools and the provision of Basic instructional materials to facilitate teaching and learning; and
5. An incentive scheme should be packaged for the teachers of the programme as this will motivate and energise them to put in their best to ensure the success of the UBE programme.

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