

# Roles of Community Education in the Management and Sustainability of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Education is seen as the bedrock of a nation's development and for any sustainable programme to take place, human factor, especially the community where the programme is taking place has to be considered. The inputs of the school are from the community and the products of the school service or engineer the community. It is in this context that, this paper assesses the significant roles played by community education in the management and sustainability of UBE programme in Nigeria. Concept of community education and Universal Basic Education are extensively examined. The paper reveals that, through knowledge, exposure and experience, what the community gain from education would enable them to see the reasons why they need to manage and sustain the UBE scheme. The study therefore, recommended that, government and other educational stakeholders should support, fund and embrace community education in the spirit of self reliance and self determination with a view to making the laudable objectives realized and sustained.

**Keywords:** *Community Education; Universal Basic Education; Conscientization; Management; Sustainability*

## 1. Introduction

The aims of making every Nigerian child have access to basic education without hindrance resulted into the introduction of Universal Basic Education programme (UBE) in Nigeria. The government believed that to educate the children and enlighten the illiterate adults is to lay a solid foundation not only for the future social and economic progress, but also for the political stability of the country. That is why the Federal Government has been making concerted efforts in ensuring that the objectives are realizable within a reasonable time. One of the efforts of the government was the involvement of all stakeholders in the education sector (i.e., the policy makers, the educational administrators, the teachers, the students, the parents and the community) that would be saddled with the responsibility of implementing and sustaining the scheme.

Obviously, Universal Basic Education is a landmark in the development of education in Nigeria. Yet, the laudable objectives of the programme may not be accomplished and sustained if the community which is one of the major stakeholders in the scheme lacks the skills and knowledge of managing, maintaining and sustaining all the structures put in place towards the realization of the objectives. It is important to note that for any programme initiated by either the government or any non-governmental organizations, the people or the community for whom such programmes is designed must have the required skill and knowledge as this would enable and assist them to be ready to appreciate the programme based on its importance and the needs of the society, otherwise the programme designed would be a waste.

The paper observed that, people's feelings at the grassroots where the UBE programme is taking off and implemented have not been adequately prepared for the process of embracing and sustaining the UBE scheme. This is because some people perceive the scheme as the sole responsibility of the government and they see no reasons why they should be involved in its management and sustainability. While the government and the international

agencies always pay much attention to health, road, technology and especially formal aspect of education, no genuine concern and effort have been directed at the non-formal aspect in which community education is one of the components.

Therefore, the paper argues that, it is through knowledge exposure and experience that the community gains from education that will assist them in raising their consciousness to react actively and see reasons why they need to appreciate, manage, protect and sustain the Universal Basic Education Programme. Thus, the paper examines the roles of community education in the management and sustainability of UBE scheme. The concepts of community education and universal basic education and the roles community education can play in sustaining universal basic education were explored.

## 2. Clarification of the concept of community education

Community education is not a new phenomenon in African nation. African traditional apprenticeship system was a form of community education constituting a recognized way of inducing enlightenment and continuity in the local communal life. Community education is defined by the Canadian Association for Community Education (1987) as a process whereby learning is used for individual, community and global betterment. It is characterized by the integrated involvement of people of all ages ... and the recognition that people can learn through, with and from each other to create a better world.

Roberts, (1979) sees community education as the process of transforming the schools and colleges in any environs or community into educational recreational center for all ages so that every member of the community will have opportunity to participate. Roberts therefore identified six basic elements of community education namely:

- (i) Use of public facilities, such as schools;
- (ii) involvement of people of all ages, income level and ethnic group;
- (iii) identification of people by their needs and problems;
- (iv) development of a variety of programmes to meet their problems or needs;
- (v) coordination among diverse agencies and institutions in the community. It must be world-wide affairs, coordinated with other agencies interested in the programme; and
- (vi) multiple funding source of both public and private that are available to community education.

Community education is therefore seen as a process of commitment to the education and leisure of all ages through local participation in setting up priorities sharing resources and the study of circumstances in such a way that the community and educational provisions quality enhance each other (Fletcher, 1980).

Anyanwu, (2002) sees community education as a process in which people become awakened to individual and collective life style they can realistically achieve, decision of the objectives to be achieved, taking cognizance of the value system under which they may choose their strategies, becoming conscious of their needs and resources, strengthening their organizational and institutional structures and moving towards an improved quality life. It is therefore, a tool employed by various societies to improve the citizens' life and mobilization of community for participation in their own self development.

Oyebamiji, (2005) defines community education as those educational activities that give opportunities for community and personal development, usually without being directed by a set of curriculum. Activities may be based in an institution or in the community. It is an all embracing approach where literacy and other functional skills become integral components of a comprehensive strategy for the total transformation of human beings and society. It is a fact however that community education is based on the notion that people are not objects of development that are to be fitted into this or that input-output table. It sees human personality as immeasurably more important than labour which is only a part of human personality.

Community education therefore has the potentialities of doing the following in the community:-

- educating and motivating the men and women for self-help projects;
- developing responsible leadership among the community men and women;
- inculcating into community men and women a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness;
- initiating a self-generative, self-sustaining and enduring process of growth among men and women;

- enabling community men and women to establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationships in their communities;
- bring about gradual and self-chosen changes in the life of community with a minimum of stress and disruption.

A critical appraisal of the concept and elements of community education stated above signifies that, community education has a local relevance. It is a type of education that stresses on the knowledge and attitudinal change rather than on mere acquisition of knowledge. Community education get involved all members of the community regardless of their status in relation to their needs and problems coordinated and funded by diverse agencies that could widen and deepen peoples' capacity to absorb, appreciate and accommodate any programme brought to the community as in the case of Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) for better living.

Community education helps the community to develop the frame of mind, the system of thought and judgment that will enable them to make effective use of all structures put in place towards the attainment of the set objectives. No wonder why Anyanwu, (1992) sees community education as a generative force for change through the organization of community for the attainment of unity of purpose, action so necessary for effective social development.

### 3. Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria

The rationale behind the free and compulsory Universal Basic Education had been set in motion as far back as 1948 when the United Nations drew the attention of the world to the issue of 'Education'. In the same vein, Awolowo, (1972) states that the idea of making education available to every child emanated from the belief that such right is inalienable, fundamental and a path towards national integration and cohesion. Little wonder then that in 1952, Chief S.O. Awokoya, the then Commissioner for education (Western Region) declared that by 1955, the government of the Western region under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo will launch the Universal Primary Education with a comprehensive educational development plan for all six years old children in the region. The programme was launched as scheduled and adult education programmes was also part of the educational plan that makes the communities understand the need for the UPE. Adults were first exposed to the policy implications of the programme as at that time so as to reduce apathy on the part of the adults in the communities. Similar UPE scheme was also carried out by the premiers of the Eastern and the Northern regions of Nigeria in 1957 and 1959 respectively based on its success in the Western region of Nigeria.

In September 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. The scheme was mutilated by subsequent military incursion in government with some attendant problems such as, inadequate planning, acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers, lack of proper funding and supervision and above all, the scheme failed to give proper and adequate attention to education of the communities where the programme was taking off on the management and sustainability of the Universal Primary Education during the period.

Consequent upon the adoption of free Education for All (EFA) in Dakar 2000, and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declaration of September 8 2000, former President, and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo announced and launched the transformation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) to Universal Basic Education (UBE) as a strategy for ensuring access to quality education. One of the steps taken by the government to make the scheme laudable was the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the education sector including the community towards the realization of the objectives.

At this juncture, there is need to use the rear view mirror approach so as to guide us to avoid the past mistakes so as to enrich the future. It could be recalled that some of the setbacks that were responsible for the failure of a similar programme introduced in 1976 are still present. These setbacks if not nipped in the bud are likely to bedevil the present UBE programme in Nigeria. Despite the fact that the UBE recognizes the roles of the community in the scheme, the government fails to give adequate skills, knowledge that will enhance or activate the initiative and interest of the community on the management and sustainability of the programme. This is because the literacy level of the citizenry shows the rate at which they will appreciate and see the reasons for accepting the programme introduced to them by the government as in the case of UBE scheme.

#### 4. Roles of community education in the management and sustainability of UBE scheme in Nigeria

As earlier noted in the foregoing discussion, community education entails all forms of education that will promote the understanding of any programme(s) brought to the adult members of the community for their own development. The level of education acquired by community determines the level of involvement in the management and sustainability of UBE scheme. Community involvement in the programme design, planning, implementation, management and evaluation would go a long way in promoting sense of belonging, encourage cooperation and enable them to see themselves as a reckoning factor in the need for change towards the sustenance of the scheme.

Briggs, (1970) asserts that education cannot be discussed or operated in a vacuum but rather in relation to the community and life of the people. Our education should be closely knitted with the life of the people and community where the school is located. The educational policy, learning and teaching should be at the same time revolving round the community because the input into education are from the community and the output (products) will go back and work in the same community. This might be responsible for the continuous growth and concern of all stakeholders in the education industry. The sustenance of any programme is determined by the people saddled with its management.

The UBE Bill of 2003, with the establishment of the Ward Education Committee specifies the following as the roles of community in the management and sustainability of UBE Scheme.

- i. Making necessary repairs and renovation of primary school and Junior secondary school buildings;
- ii. ensuring the adequacy of teaching equipment and materials required for the area,
- iii. ensuring the adequacy of teaching and non teaching staff;
- iv. ensuring good enrolment and full attendance in all primary and junior secondary schools in the area; and
- v. keeping the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) informed of all educational problems in the area.

To make the aforementioned roles of the community worthwhile and sustained as it is contained in the UBE Bills of 2003, community education will serve as a tool through which the community will acquire knowledge, skills, attitude, aptitudes, abilities, habits and competence needed in seeing the reasons for their participation in sustaining the UBE scheme. The awareness and co-operation of the communities needed to be sought through community education. Hence, community education must be based on the needs, peculiarities and aspiration of the community which enable them to be involved in educational process. Community education therefore will serve as an instrument per excellence in raising the consciousness of community members and enhance their initiative in the management and sustainability of UBE scheme in the spirit of self reliance and self determination.

It is very imperative to note that the management and sustainability of UBE scheme in the community lies in the activities of Parents Teachers Association (PTA). Oduwaiye, (2002) observes that the traditional roles of PTA in helping the schools financially, materially, educationally and morally cannot be over emphasized. Education serves as a motivating factor that reinforces the community commitment and involvement in the formation of Parents Teachers Association. Community education enables the PTA to give maximum support in releasing their children/wards to be enrolled in the scheme as well as monitoring the academic performance of their children and this would no doubt boosting the enrollment and retention of pupils.

Community education enables the community to pay attention to other areas such as, educational materials, co-curricular activities, and health care, staff welfare and above all in making sure that the environment of the school is congenial for teaching and learning process. All these will assist in making laudable objectives achieved. In the same vein, it will be noted that the safety and maintenance of all the infrastructures or materials put in place for the scheme lie in the level of education and exposure of the community to the scheme. It is community education that will enlighten the community on the need to protect and maintain all the structure and resources put in place.

Oduwaye, (2002) observes that many of the introductory technology equipment supplied for the use of schools in old 6-3-3-4 system were carted away by local communities. Many people in the area where the equipment were supplied helped themselves on the tools by pilfering and selling them. They saw them as their own share of the national cake. Thus, if the communities are well enlightened and educated, the ugly incidence would not have happened; rather the equipment ought to have been well protected and maintained. Therefore, the roles of the communities in strengthening adequacy of teaching equipment and materials, repair and renovation of school building and enrolment of pupils in schools cannot be achieved successfully without making member communities conscientized through community education.

## 5. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it could be observed that community education had a lot to do in promoting knowledge that will ginger and increase the level of community involvement in the management and sustainability of UBE scheme. Government needs to embrace and fund community education; this is because, the literacy level of the citizenry shows the rate at which they will appreciate and understand the government programme in the community and the need for their involvement towards realization of such laudable programme. Community education serve as a tool through which the community acquire knowledge, skills, attitude, aptitudes, abilities, habits and competence needed in seeing the reasons for participation in making the UBE scheme sustained.

## 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are pertinent for successful implementation of UBE in Nigeria. They are:

- i. There should be strong consciousness and commitment towards the nation's educational development, management, implementation, evaluation and sustainability. Thus, the government, non- governmental organizations (NGOs), private individuals, parents, community and other educational stakeholders should not relent in their effort towards proper funding of UBE scheme since no meaningful management and sustainability of any programme could be done without adequate funding. Government alone cannot do it.
- ii. At the same time, the communication gap between the educational policy makers and the community should be bridged in order to address any issue that may affect the success of UBE policies and programme.
- iii. There is the need to create awareness in the communities by embracing community education in the spirit of self direction, self reliance and self determination. This will go a long way in seeing reasons why parents should allow or release their children to be enrolled and equip them with basic materials needed in the school.
- iv. Community education should further be tailored towards the felt needs of the community. The need to uphold democratic principle, especially in the formation of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) is very significant. That is, all and sundry should be allowed to participate freely in the effective running of the schools, irrespective of their age, occupation, sex, cultural and political affiliation.
- v. The roles and responsibilities of the communities as contained in the UBE Blue Print should be made known to them through community education and ensuring that they uphold and implement the roles to the letter.
- vi. Above all, adequate monitoring, supervision and evaluation of UBE programme needs to be done from time to time with a view to ensuring that the laudable objectives are achieved within a reasonable period.

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