

FUNDING QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

M. S. Jimah and O. A. Unuigbokhai

Abstract

The importance of education to human beings cannot be over emphasized. As a result of this fact, educational system of a country remains the main source of human resources that when it combines in the right quantity and quality would bring about the development of the nation. This paper examined the place of fund in promoting quality basic education. Conclusion was drawn and some recommendations were made in order to improve the quality of basic education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Funding, promoting of qualify education, Nigeria

Education is the fastest growing social sector of the Nigerian economy, at least in quantitative terms. Education grew slowly but steadily during the colonial era but there was dramatic leap of forward in enrolment in the 1970s being a period of unprecedented economic growth and educational expansion due to the oil boom. The oil wealth came in form of sale of oil, oil royalties and taxes on oil and thus put Nigeria in the league of wealthy countries. Expansion in enrolment which was associated with a wealth was unprecedented in the annals of the country. The boom, which lasted for a few years because of its nature and the kind of people that managed, it, spelt doom for education. Precisely, the period after 1979 was characterized by general economic crisis and decline of the share of public expenditure received by education. This was partly because of the world-side economic recession of the 1980s, which resulted in a decline of public expenditure in many countries.

The educational system of a country remains the main source of human resources that when combined with appropriate funding, the right quantity and quality would bring about the development of the nation. The importance o education to human beings cannot be over-emphasized.

In Nigeria, the demand for popular education is so high because education is not only an investment in human capital, but also a pre-requisite as well as collateral for economic development (Adeyemo, 2000).

Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. There are a lot of international human rights instruments that provide for education as fundamental human rights. These include the universal declaration of human right. These include the universal declaration of human right (1948); the international convention on economic, social and culture right (1981); and the child right act. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a key index of development. It has been documented that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of lie such as child labour as well as bringing about empowerment.

It has been shown that education opens the door for all citizens to participate in development activities and when citizens are denied education, they are excluded from the development process, which in turn, puts them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their compatriots with the benefit of education. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis particularly in recent times for all citizens of the world to have access to basic education of good quality (Action Aid International Nigeria, 2005).

The importance and linkage of education to the development of any society is well known. It is in recognition of the importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education. Meanwhile, it has been documented that across the globe, there are inequalities in educational access and achievement as well as high levels of absolute educational deprivation of both children and adults. In order to confront this challenge, the rights-based approach, which emphasizes the participation of citizens, has been advocated.

Conceptual Framework

According to Hornby (2005), education is a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges in order to improve knowledge and develop skills. Education has been defined as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based (Fanfuwa 2003). At the outset, it is important to point out that education goes beyond schooling. In fact, schooling at all levels help to achieve the purpose of education.

Funding is a crucial and critical resource in the implementation of educational policies. Adeyemi (1998) asserted that the problem with funding was a result of myopic planning procedure which till date is the bane of the country's educational system. Hornby (2005) defined funding as a means of providing financial resources to finance a need, program or project. It also means to provide capital (funds), which means money or a project, a person or an institution. Among the main sources of funding are saving and credit.

Funding Education

One major question about funding quality education is who should finance education? The argument has always been whether the cost of education should be borne by government or by individuals receiving education. There has been a lot of debate about cost of education especially on who should bear the cost. The debate can be crudely reduced to three groups.

The first group is made up of those who argue that cost of education should be borne essentially by parents with government providing the enabling environment. They are of the view that education should be subjected to free market discipline. This group posits "that families and individuals ought to pay fees in order to access nominally available or their quality would become unacceptably low" (Tornasevski, 2003). The problem with this group is that those who are poor will not be able to pay and they will be denied access. The second group argues that education is a right, which must be funded by government. They agreed that, there are enough resources in the world to fund at least, basic education for all children. The problem associated with this group is corruption,

Funding Quality Basic Education in Nigeria

misplacement of priority, inequality and poor policies choices. It was argued that education should not only be free but also compulsory. They are of the view that government should bear all the costs because even if the direct cost of the education are borne by government, the indirect costs (such as uniform, transport and schools meals) may be beyond the capacity of the family, while the opportunities costs may be impossible to bear (Tornaserski, 2003).

The third group came from the right based approach like the second group argued that education is a right and government must not only endeavor to remove all the barriers to education but must also take steps to utilize to the maximum, its available resources to achieve progressively, the full realization of the right to education other than social and economic rights. The argued that there are three layers of obligations in matter of social and economic right: obligations to respect protect and fulfill. The obligation to respect requires states to refrain from interfering with social and economic rights e.g. refrain from forced eviction. The obligation to protect requires states to prevent violations by third parties, for example, ensuring that private employers comply with labour standards. The obligation is fulfill requires states to take appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary, judicial and other measures towards the full realization of such rights.

Some scholars are not in agreement with cost sharing arrangement on education; there are certain costs that must be borne by government if it must achieve universal access to education. In a workshop, organized by Action Aid held in Johannesburg (2005) when discussed the issue of cost of education with participants drawn from Africa, Asia, Europe and America recommended a cost-sharing formula among the various stakeholders of education. To this end, participants allocated various costs of education to the community, government and private sector as follows:

- a) Private Sector: Recreational facilities, Assistance in capacity building
- b) Community: Transport and Uniform
- c) Government: Textbooks, exercise books, infrastructure including- maintenance, tuition, salaries, utilities, teachers' training and retraining, curriculum review, school meal, libraries, good roads, toilet facilities etc.

The workshop concluded that all stakeholders have some responsibilities to ensure that children are supported to acquire quality education. The issue of who pays for what should be critically examined within a particular context. Communities need to understand the various dynamics involved in national budgeting to adequately mobilize themselves to make demands while the role of action aid and benchmark organizations, will be to facilitate this process.

Commonwealth studies on Nigeria (2005), have shown that education capital expenditure has declined sharply since the 1980s, and by 1988, the real value of capital expenditure on education was less than 17 percent of the average value of the 1980s. This trend has continued and the budgetary allocations educations have been less than 10 percent of the total federal budget from 1995 to 2006. It is interesting to note that while the expenditure on education has remained low, the average expenditure on administration was 21 percent of the total expenditure between 1995 and 1999 but grew to 31 percent from 1999 till date (CISCOPE, 2005).

Funding Quality Basic Education in Nigeria

There has been a lot of argument about the quality of education in Nigeria. Using most of the known indicators, scholars are in agreement that the quality of education is allying in Nigeria. The severe decline of the oil market in the early 80s combined with the structural adjustment programme (SAP) led to drastic reductions in spending on education. The result was unpaid teacher salaries, degradation of education facilities at all levels and strikes in schools. The end result is declining literacy rates in the country (Igbuzor, 2006).

In order to access the quality of basic education in Nigeria, it will be important to examine the following indicators.

a) **Characteristics of learners:** It is a known fact that the proper development of children affects their capacity and ability to learn. Learning outcomes and educational improvement will be enhanced with healthy and well motivated students. Unfortunately, the health status of Nigerian children is in a precarious state. Many of the children suffer from illness that can be prevented or treated with known remedies: malaria, diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory tract infections and various vaccine preventable diseases leading to more than 2,400 under five children dying daily from preventable causes and malnutrition (Nigeria millennium Development Goal 2005).

b) **Process:** The process of learning and teaching does not lead to production of analytical, critical and engaging product. The teachers do not have the competence and skills to use active pedagogies.

c) **Content of Education:** It has been documented that the content of education in Nigeria is irrelevant to the needs of prospective job seekers and teaching methods militate against the cultivation of desirable personality traits necessary for active and voluntary participation in economic life (Ukeje, 1985).

d) **System:** there are no good governance mechanism in the schools and no equitable resource allocation. Even the resources allocated are not properly utilized.

e) **Infrastructure:** the infrastructure required for delivery of quality education in Nigeria especially in public schools and in rural areas is lamentably poor.

f) **Public Expenditure:** The level of public expenditure on education has been on the decline. Nigeria operates a Federal System of Government, where education is on the concurrent legislative list with federal, state and local government providing services in this regard. Although allocation to universities, basic education ranks next to the allocation to federal universities, there has been a consistent decline from 47.18 percent in 2000 to 19.26 in 2005 (common wealth education fund, 2005).

Conclusion

It is quite clear that education for all cannot be achieved without improving the quality of funding. There is therefore the need for policies that assure decent learning conditions and opportunities.

Recommendation

Funding education is still a major pre-occupation of government at both federal and state levels. It is associated with cost and problems as highlighted above. To address these problems, the following recommendations are made in order to improve the quality of basic education in Nigeria.

- i. Government should increase the funds appropriated to education. This will in turn help in improving the provision of facilities and services. Schools especially tertiary institutions should increase their internally generated revenue efforts through the provision of consultancy services, and devise other innovative income streams from established entrepreneurship centres in- the institutions,
- ii. All stakeholders should be challenged and encouraged to share in the cost of education by paying some fees in order to attain and sustain a reasonable funding level for education in Nigeria.
- iii. Government should intensify its efforts in implementing and sustaining provision of scholarships, bursaries and loans to ensure that all Nigerians with capabilities seek education at the different levels of education can actualize their dreams.
- iv. There should be accountability and transparency in the management of funds in the institutions and there should also be mechanisms for checks and balances through the use of internal and external audits. Besides, higher institutions' budgets should be based on Zero-Based Budgeting System (ZBBS) where their managers will be compelled to defend their requests for funds from scratch.
- v. Funding for postgraduate training and research and development activities should be enhanced.
- vi. The government should draw up prudential guidelines for educational institutions to assist educational regulatory agencies and other monitors to carry out prudential examinations of schools. These guidelines are imperative to eliminate or minimize wastages due to either over-utilization or under-utilization of resources.

References

- Action Aid International Nigeria (2005). *Education for Change: based on research on Accountability, Transformation and Mobilization in Nigeria Education*. Abuja: Action Aid International Nigeria.
- Adeyemi, J.K. (1998). *Financing Public Education in Nigeria*. Educational Management for Sub-Saharan African.
- Adeyemo, b. (2000). Public School Funding: The Case of Community Mobilization and Effective Management. *Journal of Educational Development*, 2(27)
- Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication (CISCOPE) (2005). *Liberalization, Deregulation and Privatization of Education Services in Nigeria*. Abuja: CISCOPE.

Commonwealth Education Fund (2005). *Study on the Nigerian Federal Education Budget Performance 2003-2005*.

Hornby, A.S. (2005). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. New York: Oxford Press.

Igbuzor, O. (2006). *The State of Education in Nigeria*. A keynote address delivered at a Roundtable Organized by Civil Society Action Coalition for all (CSACEFA), held on 3rd July.

Nigeria Millennium Development Goals (2005) Report. Abuja: National Planning Commission.

Tomasevski, K. (2003). *Education Denied: Costs and Remedies*. London: Zed Books.