

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD (SUBEB): THE WAY FORWARD

Ihebereme Chioma(Mrs.) Ph. D and Maduewesi, B. U.

Abstract

Education is seen by all and sundry as a panacea for a vast range tasks of the society and the bedrock for national development. It is essential to acknowledge that the key to educational success lies in the custody of those who control, manage and oversee the general activities and programmes compounded in the system. This is true of the fact that, the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) has a lot of functions and responsibilities vested on them. Consequently, the decision to reposition board of education gave our primary and secondary education a spectacular standard. At least, some obstacles arising from administering the affairs of education, at the two levels by separate board has been arrested. On this premise, this paper discusses exhaustively the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and some challenges to effective functioning of the board. Besides, some recommendations are made to proffer solutions to such challenges

Introduction

The contemporary society is faced with a lot of social changes, civilization and innovation. The educational sector has also received the package of the repositioning and reformation agenda. That explains the reason for the introduction of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) as the new body that runs both pre-primary, primary and post-primary institutions.

Inherent in the benefit of embracing the change, is the emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and approaches to learning. It also acknowledges the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of an individual, with a view to moulding a total contribution to the development of the community and promotion of cultural heritage (Durosaro, 2002).

State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB): An Overview

The educational system has become so complex that its management, administration and co-ordination requires a unified and single body which can harness human, physical and material resources available to achieve the set objectives. In the onerous task of accomplishing this goal, the then State Primary Education Board (SPEB) and State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) were replaced by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). This is at present, a new institutionalized body that runs both pre-primary, primary and post-primary schools.

SUBEB is the most significant government contribution to the school system. This is because it is designed to achieve efficiency of the education enterprise. Achimugu (2000), argued that, the posterity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue nor on the strength of the public building but its citizens who are educated and enlightened. The above assertion predicated on the truism that education, in the life of any nation, remains the live wire of its people's evolution from ignorance and illiteracy to an informed state of enlightenment and moral regeneration. To this end, SUBEB owes it as an obligation to effectively carry out its role. Hence, the assertion that effective performance of SUBEB is inevitably required in the realization of the stated goals of the educational system.

Functions of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)

SUBEB is saddled with the following responsibilities:

1. Approval of new schools;
2. Deals with teachers leave matters;
3. Sponsor workshops, seminars and conferences for teachers;
4. Establishment of conditions of service for teachers;
5. Payment of emolument to both teaching and non-teaching staff in schools;
6. Ensure that annual reports are rendered by school administrators;

- 7 Staff development and promotion; Overall disciplinary control of the staff serving in the school system;
8. Posting and transferring headmasters, principals and teachers;
9. Recruitment of new teachers;
10. disbursement of funds provided by the government;
11. Retiring of teachers;
12. Awarding of contracts within board regulation; and

Challenges to Effective Functioning of SUBEB

As laudable as SUBEB is, it has suffered multiple challenges. They include:

1. Lack of Professional Personnel

This is a perennial problem, which undermined the functions of the school board. Ihebereme (2004: 16), noted that "most government administration all over the country could be said to have enthroned mediocrity in all facets of their administration, with professional personnel". The role of professional personnel is very important in the technological development of the nation and hence economic emancipation. Thus, Ogbonna (2006), infers rightly that in the technological millennium, the development of every economic sector depends on expertise.

2. Inadequate Funding

This is the most severe problem which has prevented the school board from executing its functions properly. The institution like any other business cannot be run qualitatively and effectively without an adequate financial backing. The quality and effectiveness in their job performance are directly proportional to the level of their financial commitment. Money is required to provide the needed infrastructure and materials and also pay staff salaries. The trauma of any worker whose salary is in arrears for months is better experienced than described. The resulting low morale gives rise -to low job performance exerting significant adverse effects on the system (Igwe, 1990).

3. Political Instability

The change in 'government and the board chairman has affected in a number of ways the leadership and decisions of the board. Concern has been expressed that each government in power always wants to change and re-shuffle workers to suit its tenure not minding the underlying implication of such action. Adewunmi (2001), for example, has identified "inappropriateness and inconsistency arising from instability in government circle". Therefore, it is obvious that these challenges and many others arising from the prevailing political scenario have to be sorted out to ensure efficiency of the multiple task vested on the SUBEB.

4. Lack of Accurate Statistics

Another challenge the SUBEB is facing is the non-availability of accurate school based statistics which are pertinent for proper planning and implementation of programmes. There is a great deal of imperfection and lapses in the existing published educational statistics. This however, does not augur well for meaningful result-oriented educational programme (Igwe, 1990). Sometimes reasoned guessing is the case with most figures. That, of course has had serious implication in the effective performance of SUBEB.

5. Corruption

Corruption is a social malaise which does not spare the school board. Some of the workers are engaged in various dubious and criminal acts, such as impersonation, diversion of government properties to private use, siphoning of school funds into their pockets and demand of illegal money from teachers (Aghenta, et al, 1993).

6. Ineffective Communication

The execution of activities in every organization is possible through effective communication. This could be by verbal, written or visual means. Once there is lack of free flow of information, misinterpretation of information and feedback could be experienced. For instance, in most SUBEB offices, their telephones are not functional. Some of their officers resort to using their personal mobile phone to make official calls. The reverse is the case with some workers who may decide to not to pass some information in order to avoid using their own phones. This therefore, affects efficient delivery of service (Ihebereme, 2004).

7. Inadequate Leadership

Appropriate leadership at work enhances productivity and job satisfaction. It is pertinent to note that, among the leadership styles, it is expected that the SUBEB authorities should pre-occupy themselves with the participatory democratic form of leadership, which is noted as supportive relationship between

those at the executive positions and other staff. This type of leadership style has the principle of human relations, which emphasizes the involvement of workers in decision making and policy formulation. Commenting on the principle of human relations, Uwandu and Nwagwu (2001: 184), stated that "good relationship with staff encourages a sense of belonging among staff ... administrators who foster good relationship with staff under them often times motivate them to record high productivity at work".

Strategies for Effective Functioning of SUBEB

In the light of the myriad of challenges, shortcomings, and inadequacies of SUBEB, the following suggestions are proffered for a more efficient and effective management of primary and post-primary schools in Nigeria.

1. Highly qualified experienced and efficient staff should be attracted into the system as board directors. This could be achieved by offering them adequate remunerations and conditions of service. Also in-service training facilities such as seminars and workshops geared towards effective administration should be made available to board directors and staff.
2. SUBEB should strive to create avenues of generating more fund locally to supplement whatever they get from the government to meet their needs. They should not be over dependent on the state government for their revenue. They should undertake viable investment in agriculture, commerce and industry.
3. The government should ensure adequate and regular funding of the school board. This will save the board from debt and enable (hem serve the desired purpose. Also the government should monitor closely how the money remitted to the school board is being spent.
4. The government should check the ruinous effects of corruption, fraud and similar offences, which characterize the management of the school board by specifying disciplinary measures against offenders. This will serve as a deterrent to others and save funds for educational purposes which the board is losing through, corruption and misappropriation by privileged board members.
5. Individuals appointed to serve as chairmen and members of the school board should be men and women of probity and proven integrity.
6. A comprehensive programme of enlightenment should be developed to educate members that supply and collect educational data, on the need to have accurate data at all times.
7. There is the need for effective monitoring unit to ensure accountability of resources and provision of effective guidelines. This will help to identify any mismanagement or ineffective implementation of guidelines that will hinder effective administration.
8. There is the need to involve principals and headmasters in decision making panel. They are in the position to relate the problems facing the school system.
9. There is the need to have a baseline data on which to produce plans acceptable to all stakeholders in education,
10. Government should encourage effective communication channel by installing functional telephone and other communication systems in staff offices.
11. SUBEB official should adopt a democratic style of leadership in their administration.

Conclusion

The benefits of effective performance of SUBEB in enhancing, enriching and facilitating educational programme cannot be overemphasized. Based on this premise, it is the contention of this paper that, government should rise to the challenges identified by committing the appropriate resources to the school board, and then insist on accountability which will spur SUBEB to be more efficient at delivering essential services. After all, education is considered the greatest legacy that people can hold on to, hence government owes it as a duty to ensure that agencies involved in the control and management of schools are provided with enough resources (Ukeje, et al 1992).

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