

THE ADOPTION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL DEMAND APPROACH (SDA) AS A STRATEGY TOWARDS ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF THE UBE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria launched its UBE Programme in 1999 with the purpose of taking education to the doorsteps of all Nigerian children within the age brackets of the Programme which has now been extended to Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS 3). The paper x-rayed the experience of the Universal Primary Education of 1976, using this as a basis for seeing to the success of the new UBE and suggests the adoption of the principle of Social Demand Approach (SDA) which exposes the essential conditions that must be met before a high level of success can be guaranteed. The paper suggests using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to educational planning backed by formulation of appropriate and sound policy relating to teacher demand and supply, funding, accurate demographic data, among others without which the dream of taking education to the doorsteps of Nigerian children as defined by the UBE will only remain a dream for ever.

In April 2000 more than 1,100 participants from 164 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal, for World Education Forum. They affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All (EFA) by the year 2015. EFA is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. This conference came up in Senegal having found out that 10 years later after the World Declaration of Education for All, many countries are far from reaching the ultimate goals set. The drive to achieve EFA goals also contributed to the global pursuit of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially MDG 2 on universal primary education by 2015. These countries identified six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

According to Global Monitoring Report (2008), Goal 1 deals with expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Goal 2 is meant to ensure that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and self-skills programmes is the target of Goal 3. In terms of Goal 4, ensuring the target is to achieve a 5 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. Goal 5 is pursuing the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education and gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achieving basic education of good quality as a target. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence in all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life is the target of Goal 6. The Global Monitoring Report is the world's most respected publication on progress that countries and agencies are making towards the EFA goals, providing the latest data available alongside in-depth analysis. It includes an EFA Development Index which measures the extent to which countries are meeting the EFA goals especially in primary education, adult literacy, gender parity and quality.

UNESCO (2008) declared that "more than 40 years ago, the nations of the world, speaking through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has a right to education". However, despite notable efforts by countries around the globe to ensure the right to education for all according to the Organization, the following realities persist:

- More than 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling.

- More than 960 million adults, two-thirds of whom are women, are illiterate and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries, industrialized and developing.
- More than one-third of the world's adults have no access to the printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of their lives and help them shape, and adapt to, social and cultural change and
- More than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes; millions more satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills.

In Nigeria, Education for All takes the form of the UBE Programme launched in 1999 by the President. The UBE Programme which now extends to Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS) is saddled with the following challenges to be overcome according to Badejo (2004):

1. developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. the provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age;
3. reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from formal school system (through relevance, quality and efficiency);
4. catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life – long learning.

This seems to be an onerous task for the nation considering the slow pace of progress being recorded so far. A strategy to provide Education for All especially as it concerns the objectives of the new UBE requires the adoption of the principles of the Social Demand Approach (SDA) which is the focus of the paper, otherwise the EFA goals will die as a dream. What then is SDA?

The Concept of Social Demand Approach (SDA)

Social Demand Approach is a method of educational planning that ensures that education is given to everybody (Eze, 1983; Campbell, 2002; Babalola, 2003; Fabunmi, 2007; Olaniyonu, Adekoya and Gbenu, 2008). The SDA actually sees education as a public service which should be provided to all the citizens who desire it. It is a consumption view of education. This approach sees education as a social necessity and inalienable right of every citizen. It is suitable when education is considered as an obligation and not a privilege. The Dutch adopted the SDA in planning their educational system according to Fabunmi, (2007) when the government wrote that “if a sufficiently qualified citizen stands at the door of any type of school, he must be admitted, and it is the responsibility of the appropriate government authorities to anticipate his requests so that school capacity will be adequate to accommodate him”. In Nigeria, the adoption of the SDA can be seen in terms of the Universal Primary Education of 1976 and the present UBE Programme.

Conditions of the SDA

The SDA according to Longe (2003) and Olaniyonu, Adekoya and Gbenu (2008) requires that accurate demographic information be made available. Such information concerns the total number of pupils to provide education for, the number of teachers to be trained, present classroom facilities and how many more to provide and equipment and laboratories that will be used. As a measure of ensuring almost an accurate projection of pupil population, the Approach recommends the use of *population growth rate* formula and *time series analysis* which study past population trends and extrapolate this to the future. This is necessary so that the expected future population (estimate) can be determined at present and facilities made available.

SDA has a number of advantages when adopted which are actually in line with the desires of the goals of UBE according to Olaniyonu et al (2008) and Gbadamosi (2005). It increases the level of literacy, enhances equality of educational opportunities, reduces the level of social tension in nations

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where education acts as social ladder, has political appeal which politicians use as a means of winning votes, less complex in adoption and it facilitates the process of income re-distribution.

Experience of the UPE of 1976 in Nigeria

The use of SDA as said before involves large expansion of the school system in covering areas of enrolment, increase in teacher demand and supply and sufficient classroom and other facilities. The experience of Nigeria so far is that governments have not taken these conditions into consideration adequately. For instance as reported by Longe (2003), enrolment in the country's primary education between 1971 and 1981/82 shows that it rose from 3,894,539 in 1971 to 14,782,247 in 1981/82 showing an increase of about 278%. The remarkable jump in 1976/77 shows the effect of introducing UPE.

In Nigeria, the annual increase in enrolment between 1971 and 1975/76 was 13% but in 1976/77 it rose to 36.5% with a decline to 15.7% after that year. In numerical terms the primary school system increased its enrolment by 2.3 million pupils in only one year. This large increase in enrolment had a tremendous impact on teachers and facilities. For instance, Nigeria's primary education policy requires an average teacher/pupil ration of 1:40. The increase in enrolment of 2.3 million between 1975/76 and 1976/77 means that 57,500 more teachers were required. The outcome was that many schools were understaffed, classes had to be merged and in some cases, unqualified teachers such as West African School Certificate holders or S.75 holders had to be used to teach. In the same vein, classroom facilities were inadequate as evident by the holding of classes under trees and in open places.

Threats to the Success of the SDA

As mentioned earlier, SDA requires sufficient number of qualified teachers to man various classes and facilities in required proportion to the expected student population especially now that the new UBE Scheme has been extended to the JSS level. This will gulp a lot of money apart from sound policy. The issue of funding is a serious case and must be addressed seriously, otherwise, the application of SDA to Nigeria's educational demand will fail, yet no alternative to educating all Nigerians due to its less-complex nature. The financial situation in Nigeria can easily find its place in UNESCO's (2008) statement:

The world faces daunting problems notably mounting debt burdens, the threat of economic stagnation and decline, rapid population growth, widening economic disparities among and within nations, war, occupation, civil strife, violent crime, the preventable deaths of millions of children and widespread environmental degradation. These problems constrain efforts to meet basic learning needs, with the lack of basic education among a significant proportion of the population prevents societies from addressing such problems with strength and purpose.

These problems have led to major setbacks in basic education in the 1980s in many of the least developed countries. In some other countries according to the Organization, economic growth has been available to finance education expansion, but even so, many millions remain in poverty and unschooled or illiterate. In certain industrialized countries too, cutbacks in government expenditure over the 1980s have led to the deterioration of education.

According to Obasa (2004), for UBE to succeed, which in actual fact is embracing the principles of SDA, "there must be meticulous implementation. Towards this line is adequate funding. In the past, what was allocated to UPE was inadequate and what was available was ineffectively utilized".

Another threat to the success of the SDA is the issue of weight to attach to future enrolment and other important variables that are not seen now going by variations in factors that were used especially in prediction in the past. The stronger the weight to be used the better the level of success to be achieved by the SDA.

Equally important to mention is the issue of using population growth rate and time series analysis which largely use past trend to extrapolate into the future. Time series in particular, though more powerful than population growth rate, believes that the past will look like the present and the future. It is a mechanistic approach holding on a fact which may not always be the case. However, because it is quantitative in nature, qualitative approaches such as Delphi technique which relies strongly on the strength of experience and knowledge of experts in the field of interest can be adopted to the quantitative aspect which time series upholds.

Most importantly is the formulation of appropriate policy and the political will to see through the success of the UBE Programme. Such policy must cover teacher availability, teacher salaries, facilities in terms of classrooms, laboratories, keeping of records, and large enrolment of pupils, among others. For instance, as it is now in Nigeria, it is a crime for children within the age brackets of the UBE Programme not to be in school and parents/wards of such children are meant to be penalized. The extent to which this can be enforced is another matter of concern. Thus everybody should be interested from federal level of planning to community effort.

Conclusion

Education is a fundamental right for all people which can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world while at the same time contributing to social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation. Therefore, by virtue of this indispensable key to personal and social improvement guaranteed by sound education, it is expedient that quality education is taken to the doorsteps of all and sundry, if not for all levels of education, at least as defined by the UBE programme in Nigeria. This can only be achieved through the principles of SDA. The only condition is the fulfilment of its requirements as exposed by the study.

Recommendations

To ensure the success of the UBE Programme in Nigeria, the following need to serve as guide for the implementers which are largely taken out of the principles of the Social Demand Approach.

- Accurate demographic information must be kept regarding the total number of pupils expected which will serve as a guide to the number of teachers and quality required, facilities in terms of classroom and other facilities to guarantee effective teaching/learning exercise.
- Policy formulators must attach adequate weights to major variables that are fundamental to the success of the UBE Programme. A good example of learning from the experience of the past, is the issue of funding. Therefore, there must be a stable source of funding which can come from the three-tiers of government. In addition, there must be a realistic fixed revenue coming from the national income as dictated by the world crude price on international market.
- To guarantee a high level success of the UBE, there is need to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to educational planning. Combining the two has been found to produce more effective results.
- Above all, the law on defaulting parents to send their wards/children to schools should be enforced by appropriate authorities.

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