

APPLICATION OF THE SYSTEMS APPROACH IN THE ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME.

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Abstract

Education is a catalyst with which modern society masticates its developmental foods. Bursari Local Government Area of Yobe State is one of the several local government areas in the state that is educationally disadvantaged. Wastage at Secondary School level is rampant and truant behaviour among these students makes it difficult for most of them to perform well at the S.S.C.E. The local government still, to some extent, relies on borrowed manpower to teach in primary schools. To intervene, the Council took a giant political decision to overcome this problem by awarding special scholarship to indigenes of the EGA who have secured admissions to tertiary institutions. This paper therefore examined the process which lead to this decision, using the systems approach.

Introduction

In Nigeria today, it is common place to see states and local councils that are described as educationally disadvantaged. These are usually characterized by low enrolment at virtually all levels, high wastage rate, and general lack lustre attitude to education. Bursari Local Government Area in Yobe State is one of them. It is one of the nineteen Local Government areas in Yobe State. It is created from former Damaturu Local Government. The predominant tribes in the area are Manga/Kauri, Bade, Fulani and Hausa. Educationally, the Local Government is backward; school attendance is low in most primary schools except in the predominantly Bade speaking areas; and wastage is high especially at the secondary school level. It is very difficult to find girls completing their secondary school education. Truancy among secondary school children in the area makes it difficult for some of those who complete their school to pass out with required credits which could qualify them for admission into tertiary institutions in the country. Some of these products join the local government services at various departments but the expected output is very low. Few who have performed well at the SSCE also have low zeal to go for higher education.

These problems constitute threat and big challenges to the Local Government Council to tackle. In a bid to obviate the situation, the Council introduced a special scholarship scheme to indigenes who secured admissions to tertiary institutions. This paper intends to assess this special scheme using the systems approach.

Process Leading To The Decisional Outcome:

Deutch (1980:104) defined system as "a collection of recognisable units or components that hang together and vary together, in a nanner regular enough to be described. Systems theory postulates that a political system is a vast conversion process through which the input demands and support are transformed by structures and processed into outputs, that is into authoritative decisions and actions.

A political system is a pattern of political relationship. No human society (or association) is exclusively political in all its aspects. Peoples experience many other relationships then power and authority, love, respect, dedication, shared beliefs and so on, Dahl (1970:6). The people of Bursari have Share these ideals. A political resource is a means by which one person can influence behaviours of other persons. Dahl (1970:37) identified these resources to include money friendship social standing, food, the threat of force, jobs, the right to make law's and a great variety of other things. The chairman is in control of these resources.

Kaston described political system as those interactions through which values arc

authoritatively* allocated for society... binding decisions are made and implemented (Dennis. 1973:33). In other words, it is like a set of structures and processes through which demands of the politically relevant members are converted into binding decision and related action. The decision to award special scholarship to Bursari indigenes to study in higher institutions of learning is a good example of this action. This conversion process becomes feasible as long as Bursari local government is able to elicit the support of the relevant members. Hence the political system is a vast conversion process through which the input of demands and support are transformed by structures and processed into outputs, that is into authoritative decisions and actions.

An Assessment Of The Scheme

The linkage between the political system and other social subsystems such as family, village, communities and so on are important elements in this framework of analysis. Under certain conditions, other subsystem reciprocally interact with the political system. Wirt and Kirst (1972) described this relationship as one in which stress in other subsystems of the social environment generates inputs of demand and support upon the political system which then reduces or converts these inputs into public decisions or outputs which inturn feed back allocated values in the society whence the process began, Dahl (1970:14). for example anti- and pro- scholarship scheme by the local government produce the stress for the system, which generate inputs of demands and support upon the local government from parents, students and development - minded elites. The local government then reduces or converts these inputs into outputs in form of final decision to award scholarship to indigenes who secure admission in any institution of higher learning a warmly welcome idea. This supports the assertion of Reilly and Sigal (1976:5) that political decision - making begins with the needs and desires of the people and ends with the allocation of limited resources among them. Politics involves choices and that choice is typical of all human behaviour. In the same vein, the local government provides a framework for the give and take of political decisions that arc binding upon every one.

Consideration Of Other Social Factors

education is of strong factor in the economic circumstances of the modern world. "This importance heightens rather than diminishes the need for careful ordering of priorities" during annual budgeting of many countries (Low6, 1991) The crucial latent functions of education in developing societies are selection and allocation. In case of educationally disadvantaged local government areas, it is assistance in an attempt to produce mass educated elites of all calibre. The selection function will take care of itself when we have more than enough to cater for our local government services, primary school teachers and other services outside the local government area.

I he issue of scholarship award to all deserving indigenes of this local government area is a cherished idea. Status position should be achieved on the basis of merit, rather than other factors. However, somewhere along the line, some students from the same area find it difficult to enjoy this good gesture. All children from Bursari should now' have equal opportunity to achieve high status with privileged children all over the country. Poverty Alleviation Programme and Universal Basic Education (UBF) are two additional laudable political programme which would assist in guiding the authorities at the local level to achieve good educational programmes. They are intended to reduce and discourage nepotism, legislating elimination of discrimination on the basis of religion, tribal, gender or other political differences.

Hum's (1978:37) functional paradigm of schooling sees modern society as meritocratic: a society where ability and effort count for more than privilege and inherited status. It is the theory of what schools do, how schools are changing and will change in future, and a justification for high levels of society commitment to schooling. It is a process where the needs of the increasing complex society for talented and expert personnel are met by outputs from the educational system in the form of cognitive skills and the selection of talented individuals. As an investment in human capital, education will pay off in form of increased 'dividend' in the future of Bursari local government.

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When talking about the slow process of change in Africa as against old colonial system of education as equated to radical approach expected of the modern elites in society, Fafunwa (1969:141) warned that it is most unlikely that one can use yesterday's tool for today's job and expect to be in business tomorrow. In the same vein, it is a blessing to have new' Tunctionarbrain in the local vernment system. Bursari local government have had series of leaders since its creation. Over ten *ars now but the political decision of this nature had not been a priority of 'the yesterdays government'. Access to schooling is a necessity. The problem in Bursari is the question of ntinuance as contrasted with mere entry into secondary school. It is a "no mean matter in territories :here retardation and drop-out are high and where gaining a secondary school certificate is more riportant than having had some kind of post - primary experiences, (Adams. 1971:25). T he local overnment has introduced the scholarship scheme to help parents send their children to higher institutions.

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