Educational Planning and Local Community Development in Nigeria

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Abstract
The paper examines some of the peculiar problems militating against effective implementation of educational programmes in local communities in Nigeria which have almost rendered educational planning impotent. This serves as an eye opener to stakeholders in education especially the government on some of the challenges facing successful educational planning in Nigeria particularly as they relate to local communities in the country. Taking education to the doorsteps of every child in the villages has been a herculean task due to certain problems which must be addressed in order to increase literacy level in local communities in the country. Some of the thorny problems identified are: crude data/unreliable information produced at that level (which have made educational planning difficult), political influence, funding, cultural and social rigidities, low level of income among others. The paper suggests raising of funds to implement educational programmes, proper orientation to break the barriers posed by cultural and social rigidities, paying more attention to local communities and calling on all and sundry to implement educational programmes in local communities in Nigeria which have almost been rendered impotent. This serves as an eye opener to stakeholders in education especially the government on some of the challenges facing successful educational planning in Nigeria particularly as they relate to local communities in the country. Taking education to the doorsteps of every child in the villages has been a herculean task due to certain problems which must be addressed in order to increase literacy level in local communities in the country. Some of the thorny problems identified are: crude data/unreliable information produced at that level (which have made educational planning difficult), political influence, funding, cultural and social rigidities, low level of income among others. The paper suggests raising of funds to implement educational programmes, proper orientation to break the barriers posed by cultural and social rigidities, paying more attention to local communities and calling on all and sundry to revive education at this level, all these being the way out for a well-articulated educational planning.

Keywords: educational planning, local community, school mapping, micro planning and macro planning.

INTRODUCTION
Planning is seen as a peep into the future. It is an integral aspect of policy making which helps decision makers and policy formulators function effectively. It is an administrative strategy which makes conscious effort and attempt to control the future in the desired direction through careful planning estimates and budgeting. It is a continuous and on-going process concerned not only with where to go but how to get there and by what best route. It is as a result of these fundamental issues about planning that makes it inevitable in education and indeed in all human endeavour, a view that is also supported by Adeniji (2003) when he asserts that, "planning is a crucial fulcrum in every human endeavour".

Meanwhile, education is a continuous process in life. It begins right from one's birth and ends at death. It starts from homes and continues even after school to adulthood. It is the process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind and character of people. It can as well be seen as the process by which the latent abilities of individuals are developed so that they may be useful to themselves and the society. Government and individuals according to Babalola (2003) have seen education as beneficial and as such they express their willingness, readiness and ability to participate in a given educational programme through active supports for the system. It is also known that education inculcates skills, imparts knowledge, provides job ethics and social attitudes conducive to production and civilization, serving also as a screening device for selecting or identifying talents in the most efficient manner. Through screening, education ensures that the best people are made available for the world of work and at times, politics and leadership.

It can therefore be seen that the functions performed by education towards development of a nation in totality (especially in developing countries to which Nigeria belongs) are multifarious and unique especially when it concerns touching people at the grassroots. The focus of the paper is therefore to look at the problems encountered by educational planning or planners in the bid to get the local level through education or better still, to expose the constraints militating against the effective planning of education at that level especially given the high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria. This is necessary to avoid or reduce some of the bottlenecks likely to be encountered in community development.

DEFINITION OF BASIC CONCEPTS
Educational Planning
Olaniyinu, Adekoya and Gbenu (2004) citing Coombs (1970) see educational planning as "the application of rational systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs of the students and the society". To Campbell (1999):
It is a specialized form of goal setting which entails a set of purposeful and conscious activities believed to be vital for the educational system and involves a controlled sequence of events relating to growth in the form of increases in quantity and size and development in the form of quality and value of the educational enterprise. Educational planning according to Longe (2003) "involves taking of decisions for future action with the view to achieving predetermined objectives through optimum use of scarce resources".

From these, it can be inferred that there must be clearly stated goals set for education; these goals are realized by making judicious use available scarce resources; and the goals must be in line with the needs and aspirations of the citizens and the society.

Local Community
To Hornby (2000), community refers to "a group of people of the same religion, race, occupation, etc or with shared interest". To Omolayole (1998), in the urban centre, "community will normally refer to all those with common interest living in a given ideographical space not considered too large to make it unwieldy whereas in the rural areas, the community will strictly comprise people with the same origin". Strictly speaking and for the purpose of the paper the definition on rural area is adopted for the concept of local community.

Educational Planning Process and Practice
According to Longe (2003), "educational planning process usually takes place at the national, state, local and institutional levels". At the national and state levels, the plans lay down broad objectives, strategies and targets while the details are worked out at the local and institutional levels. Planning at the national or state level is referred to as 'macro planning' and planning at the local or institutional level is known as 'micro planning'. Both macro and micro planning are mutually complementary.

By virtue of the nature of the paper, micro planning is focused upon which is the educational planning at the local government level. It is at this level that a diagnosis is made taking into account both the general orientations of educational policy and the local geographic, economic, social and cultural realities. Micro planning is often described as planning at the grassroots because it is primarily concerned with an in-depth study of educational problems as they are perceived at the local and institutional levels. Moreover, micro planning reflects a desire to improve the functioning of the education system by reinforcing planning activities at the grassroots. Micro planning deals with problems linked to access to the educational system. It looks into the problem of acquisition and maintenance of teaching equipment, into the altitude of parents, pupils and teachers to education and so forth. Micro planning seeks greater equality in the allocation of educational services which suit the needs of the local communities. The various areas involved in micro planning according to Longe (2003) can be classified into three namely: school mapping, educational disparity and internal efficiency.

The objectives of school mapping cut across all the functions in micro planning but principally, it is concerned with the problems linked with access and accessibility to the education system (school location). It seeks to satisfy effectiveness, and to minimize costs as much as possible while taking into account the overall objectives. Educational disparity refers to a situation within the education system whereby regions, state, or local governments do not enjoy the same level of opportunities for educational development. In this regard, the concept of equality of opportunity in education is closely linked with the concept of educational disparity. Considering equality in education in a society, the question is whether enough quality of educational facilities in form of schools, teachers and funds are provided in the education system to allow for equal access to education, and equal achievement in education. The task of the planner is to supply statistical information which reveals the areas which most need educational services.

With reference to internal efficiency, educational planning is not only concerned with the problem of allocation of resources but also with the problem of efficient utilization of resources. The question here is how efficient the education system is in terms of the level of quality of output. Indicators such as the enrolment ratio, the dropout rate, the repetition rate, the students-teacher ratio, the unit cost and so forth, show the level of efficiency of the education system. The planner is inclined to show justification for the size of resource allocation to the education system.

Phases in Educational Planning Process
The main phases in the planning process as identified by Longe (2003) are policy making, plan formulation and plan implementation and evaluation. Policy making is often performed by the 'government of the day' or the 'polity' through the legislature and the executive. A plan is initiated with broad objectives, the details of which are prepared in the next phase. Plan formulation is a technical function involving statistical analysis to back up the plan. This phase is also referred to as plan technology. At this stage, direction is given to the policy maker as to whether or not it is feasible to
undertake a particular educational project. Recommendation is also afforded the policy maker as to the areas in the education system mostly needing educational facilities. Plan implementation is an administrative function. This involves the use of the annual budget and the setting up of an organization for the several types of educational projects, and allocation of resources needed for every project. This phase may also include a fourth and essential function of 'plan evaluation'. Plan evaluation may continue throughout the planning circle and it may be performed as the final attestation of a finished project. The different phases in the planning process are not independent of each other but are interlinked. The planning process reflects a cycle with one phase rolling into the next phase. The plan reflecting the aspiration of the nation is initiated through the political function, the technical planner interprets the plan and the plan is implemented through administrative machinery. The evaluation function completes the cycle, the feedback of which forms an input in the new plan.

**Necessity for Planning Education in Nigeria**

Education cannot be left to market forces of demand and supply as is generally upheld in educational planning and economics of education due to its nature and the importance it plays in the development of nations. Education in the first place is a good that provides benefits not only to the recipient but also to the community. In that sense, it is not a pure private good. Furthermore, it is also not a pure public good in that the individual gains financially from his education because of the presence of both aspects of private and public benefits in education. Therefore, it is not possible to use the market mechanism for the provision of education. This is due to the fact that potential "customers" are not likely to willingly express their demand. For this reason, it becomes necessary that the national authorities interfere with the provision of education.

Another reason which is particularly important to newly independent and developing countries is their desire to quickly train adequate manpower stock to occupy vital positions vacated by expatriates on attainment of independence and the need to develop their economies as fast as possible. Nigeria is no exception. Furthermore, it is argued that illiteracy and ignorance could be great obstacles to future development in the social, political and economic spheres of life. Since governments are all bent to eradicate illiteracy and poverty, providing education to their citizenry occupies top priority position in the development programme. Illiteracy and poverty are top features of local communities in Nigeria.

Some other reasons, as supported by Olaniyounu, Adekoya and Gbenu (2004) can be stated as follows:

- **Education for national development.** The transformation of the economy from a mono-product one to a gigantic well-industrialized one can best be achieved through education.
- **Education as a Means of Ensuring Social Equity.** It is only through education that the degree of disparity in existence between the urban and rural settlers can be reduced or eliminated in Nigeria. In most countries, education is seen as an instrument that can be used to reduce income inequalities and occupational differences between or among groups in the society. Added to this is the fact that education is seen as the right of every individual in Nigeria’s constitution.
- **In order to promote efficiency in education in totality, there is a strong need to have it planned in Nigeria to avoid resource wastage.**
- **The complexity of the nature of education, the activities of the administrators and managers within the system in Nigeria and the diffused nature of the goals of education call for proper planning of education in the country.**

**Problems of Planning Education for Local Community Development in Nigeria**

Among the problems of planning education in Nigeria for local community development, the following deserve mention.

- **Political problem.** This refers to the effect of the use of power, influence and authority by the government of the day, especially in the allocation of resources. Legislature has a direct influence on the planning processes as the body responsible for policy formulation on educational development. Generally, the legislature is compelled to serve the interest of other special interest groups. There is therefore the possibility of conflicts between legislature and the rational ideas proposed by the technical planners which has been based on statistical analysis of the education system. The legislature represents the government; the technical planner is responsible for analysis of the education system, making available projection for enrolment, physical facilities, funds and personnel required for an educational project.
- **Government instability.** This has been a very serious bottleneck to plan implementation in Nigeria where there is often a frequent change of government. Planning of any kind in Nigeria is dated back as beginning in 1946. Since this time, political conditions conducive to smooth implementation of plans have been lacking in the country. On the whole, the trend
in the government of most developing countries of the world has been that new governments come in with different style of decision-making. Plans made by previous governments are either disrupted or discontinued. This is expected to reduce or change now with the advent of democracy if well practised.

- Economic and data constraints. By economic constraints in educational planning, it is meant a situation whereby an educational reform may not be successfully implemented because of shortage or lack of financial and human resources. Financial bottleneck in the implementation of plans occurs in Nigeria for the following reasons: a) over-reliance on foreign assistance which might not come after all; b) over-estimation of the expected national revenue which constitutes a serious financial constraint to plan implementation. The economy of the country is very unstable because it is based mainly on either subsistence agriculture or oil-production; c) educational planning very often fails because of underestimation of resource needs in terms of enrolment, teachers, physical facilities, equipment and others. This problem may be linked with inadequate projection arising from lack of adequate statistical data. Statistical deficiency is one of the major constraints to the planning of any sort especially at the local level in Nigeria.

- Social and cultural problems. This refers to the effects of pressure groups such as religious organizations and student organizations on the planning process. Individuals, communities and organizations in Nigeria are aware of their constitutional rights to education; compete for a fair share of educational resources at the national, state and local levels. In the process of decision making in the education sector, the various organizations form pressure groups to bring to bare on the planning process, particularly on the legislature, their group's educational goals. The inputs from the various organizations often significantly affect the outcome of educational reforms to the extent that compromises rather than national plans eventually emerge. Moreover, the concept of education is variously conceived by the different communities. Depending on the interpretation of education, different communities press for different kinds of education. While certain communities aspire for western type of education, some press for religious education while others press for treasured traditional values. Reforming the educational system may result in conflicts between various communities and organizations. Educational planning therefore tends to compromise what is statistically and economically rational for socio-cultural ideals.

- Another worrisome problem in local communities in Nigeria is the issue of structural rigidities arising from beliefs which have often made planning difficult. Even if this is taken note of by the planners, because of the nature of the rigidity, it becomes burdensome to penetrate the people with such decision arising from educational planning. The issue of ‘the place of women being in the kitchen’ as often upheld by some tribes lends a testimony to this point.

- Administrative problem. This refers to the effect of bureaucracies in plan implementation. A major function in the planning – implementation – is performed by bureaucracy which is the administrative machinery of the government. An educational plan of necessity is filtered through the bureaucratic system. Bureaucracy is beset with myriads of problems which are likely to constitute impediments to plan implementation. This includes its own norms of functioning, which are commonly viewed as difficult and slow. This is sometimes termed red tape system of functioning. Another problem is bad communication within the system or simply the bad climate, which slows down activities within the bureaucracy system. Furthermore, the administrators responsible for plan implementation are themselves civil servants, who are expected to be loyal to the government of the day. While these administrators are obliged to carry out political loyalties to various organizations, this may influence their attitude towards an educational project. Administrators can use their special position to slow down the course of plan implementation and in fact, disrupt educational projects considered to be contrary to public interests. Decisions on education meant for local level are unnecessarily delayed and sometimes the area will have to make use of ‘godfather’.

- Politicization of education. This has led some areas or parts of the country enjoying better educational policies than others. For instance, different cut-off marks for admission into schools, all in the name of ‘educationally disadvantaged’ states, nomadic education, riverine education, etc. are some of the policies which may not favour some communities. Inability of the government to mobilize people's support for educational funding since it is evident that government
alone cannot satisfactorily fund education.

- High level of corruption and wastage of resources in which the limited fund made available is diverted into personal purses and sometimes used for projects not budgeted for.

- Inadequate manpower. This has manifested itself in the areas of those to plan for education and implement such plans. In addition to manpower being inadequate, some of those available are incompetent. In schools, those to teach core subjects (such as vocational and technical subjects) are also either inadequate or incompetent. All these have made planning for education difficult.

- Poor planning technique. This is one of the effects of having incompetent planners manning planning section in the ministries. Some of them are not well versed in modern planning techniques that will make the job easy at minimized cost. They can hardly use or interpret data and of course can hardly subject data to real analysis.

- Another important issue is also the high level of illiteracy in the rural areas. If people could not read and write, it is difficult to pass any government message across to them let alone abide by such laws or principles. There is equally too poor development level where basic facilities are lacking. This will discourage planners going to such interiors especially where there are no electricity facilities, water, and good road network. Teachers too will find it inconvenient going to such areas to teach and live. Another problem that may likely arise, result from inability of planners to consider uncontrollable factors such as economic situation, and climatic factor.

Adeyemo (1998) gives the following as some of the general problems facing education in Nigeria: ineffective and inefficient organizing; deficiencies in resource management; empty and mere arrogance on educational matters; poor establishment of community system; anti-institutional activities and gross indiscipline; poor funding of public schools and education sector generally and poor participatory positions of the members of the public in educational matters especially in public school funding.

It is equally important to mention the problem of low level of income. There is high level of poverty at this level, even if there is an agreement that local areas should generate funds or contribute financially towards the development of educational programmes, this may not likely succeed as a result of their low income generating capacity. Worsening the situation is the case of illiteracy.

CONCLUSION

There is no gainsaying the fact that there is a high level of illiteracy in Nigeria especially at the local level. This is worsened by the several decades of improper and poor contact of education with that level. To improve on the literacy level at the grassroots, there is need for every practitioner (government, private individuals, organizations and nongovernmental organizations) to work cooperatively and project the image of education to a brighter state giving inhabitants of the communities some degree of hope for survival and making the nation feel the impact of educational planning. This is a major way to justify the existence of educational planning in Nigeria and the huge resources (financial and non-financial) expended on the education sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the government increasingly laments on a daily basis of its inability to fund education thoroughly, there is the need to get communities involved in the running of education (financial and control-wise). It is in realization of this fact that made Ajayi and Adesina (1998) assert that “the government would have to openly accept the bitter fact that the brunt of financing the system cannot be totally borne by it”. Therefore, as a way out it is important to identify and recognize the wide range of non-governmental organizations like religious bodies, village development associations, social and philanthropic organizations as well as eminent individuals. In doing this, government should be aware that social, political as well as cultural interests and motives of the individuals and groups cannot be played down upon or neglected. In addition to this, private corporate bodies should be encouraged to make education one of the social services that should be provided to their communities. Moves could be made to enhance other forms of community participation. This includes organization of workshops, publicity, offering grants, provision of management and technical advice, etc. At the local community level, it may be necessary for the community to find ways and means of selecting good leaders, securing powerful sponsors, forming a liaison with government and fostering international links.

On the issue of cultural and social rigidities arising from beliefs, government should intensify efforts at orientating the people using the mass media (in local languages mostly) through which they can understand the uniqueness and importance of the programme at hand. It may take time to break such a barrier but gradually, such a barrier will fade away.
As much as possible, democracy should be fortified in the country since it guarantees freedom of speech and accessibility to people at any level.

There should also be continuity in educational programmes or plans. A plan should provide the basis for organized research while another phase of the plan should make use of the result of the research. Equally important too, here, is the issue of evaluation of programmes to know the extent of deviation from laid down objectives meant for the local level.

Educational planners should endeavour to consider the economic situation in the country and factor this into their programmes more so that there is economic meltdown worldwide which may be a source of disruption to programmes at the local level. The government should generally endeavour to supply reliable information to planners (devoid of political manoeuvring) since this is the basis upon which decisions will be made.

Efforts should be made at ensuring that development at the local level is given better and higher priority above the urban area and trying to reduce the degree of bureaucratic structures involved in implementation of programmes for that level.

It is important to state that for a clean and efficient administration, a firm educational base is essential. Planning to be successful must take care of ethical and moral standards of the people (including those at the local level). One cannot expect economy and efficient administration unless the people possess high ethical and moral values. This is not possible unless a strong educational base is built up where instructions are imparted both in academic and technical fields.

Above all, public cooperation is considered to be one of the important levers for the success of the plan in a democratic country. Planning requires the cooperation of the people. Planning should be above party politics but at the same time should have the approval of the parties.

If education and planning are so essential towards the development of a nation especially in developing countries where there is a high number of undeveloped local communities, some of the suggestions here will go a long way at remedying the situation in Nigeria if the country would want to join the comity of nations in terms of growth and development.

REFERENCES


