

THE EXTENT OF BASIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE NATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION REFORM IN ILORIN METROPOLIS.

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ABSTRACT

WHILE acknowledging the epochal nature of the educational reforms introduced by the Obasanjo administration especially at the basic education level, it is important to note that teacher the one major stake-holders, had not been properly carried along in the formulation and implementation of the reform. This study examined the extent of basic school teachers' awareness and involvement in the reforms at the basic education level in Nigeria. Findings in the study showed that the level of basic school teachers' awareness and involvement in the reform is still very low. It is concluded that the reforms may not be successful without adequate enlightenment and involvement of the teachers who are the grass root implementers of the education policy. The paper has suggested strategies towards enhancing teachers' awareness and involvement for successful implementation of the reforms of the basic education in Ilorin in particular and other parts of the country in general.

Key words: Basic education, Reform, Teachers awareness, Teachers involvement

INTRODUCTION

The urgent need for educational reforms can be fully appreciated against the back drop of the declaration by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1998) that 60% of Nigerians were illiterates. The situation is worrisome because

no nation can rise above her level of education. Indeed, education that determines scientific and technological progress of a nation. That only 14 million out of the about 21 million Nigerian children of school age were actually enrolled in school (Federal Ministry of Education, 1996) is a cause for the genuine concern of all stake holders.

IFESH (2007) also observed that primary school enrolments in Africa countries are among the lowest in the world. IFESH (2007) submitted that Africa is adversely affected by limited fund, and quantity and quality of teaching and learning materials. In line with this, USAID (2007) also observed that 38 percent of school-aged children, mostly girls, do not attend primary school.

Economic and social developments are increasingly driven by the advancement and application of knowledge. Williams (2004) noted that education is fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy and society in all nations. Yet the potential of education system in developing countries to fulfil this responsibility is frequently thwarted by long- standing problem of finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance. These problems could be regarded as the old challenges in the present day economy.

Salami (2001) argued that the problem of Nigeria is of two types, that is the old challenges augmented and strengthened by the new challenges which are linked to the growing role of knowledge in economic development, rapid change in telecommunication technology, and the globalization of trade and labour market.

In other words, knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development in the 21st century. Porter (1990) argued that through the capacity of knowledge to augment productivity, it increasingly constitutes the foundation of a country's competitive advantage. This change is most evident in OECD countries, where investments in the intangibles that make up the knowledge base of a country (e.g. research and development, higher education. Computer software, patents) are equalling or exceeding investment in physical equipment (OECD 2001). While undergoing these transformations, many developing countries are not yet reaping their benefits. This is because the capacity to penetrate and harness knowledge in the pursuit of sustained development and improved living standards is not spread equally among nations.

Because of low literacy level, Nigeria does not enjoy the fruits of the self-promoting cycle in which the benefits of research help to produce the wealth and public support needed to enable continued investment in Research and Development (R& D). Nigeria is one of the developing countries which have neither articulated a development strategy linking knowledge to economic growth nor built their capacity to do so.

Another serious problem is the drop- out rate at the basic education level. For instance, International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA Forum) (2001) observed that in 1995, the percentage of elementary students dropping out by the sixth year stood at 30.8 percent.

Following years of questionable education policies under various military administrations, the 1999 democratically elected government of Olusegun Obasanjo offered initiatives which are called reforms, affecting all levels of education including the basic education. The effort is geared towards making Nigeria to become an emerging economic model, delivering sound educational policy and management for public good (All Africa Global Media, 2007). It is this vision that has expanded the role of education as an investment for economic, social; and political development.

Newsedge (2007) opined that education has become a tool of empowerment for the poor as the socially marginal red groups, an effective means of developing full capacities as potentials of the human resources, and a veritable means of developing a sound intelligent learning society. To attain the goals of the nation, the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education (FME), under the ministership of Mrs. Obiageli Ezakwesili introduced a blueprint for education reforms and intervention documented in the Ministry's whitepaper titled "vision 2020: The role of the Nigeria Education Sector".

The education reform embarked upon by government to stimulate national growth and development appears ambitious. It is aimed at providing education to all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, religion, occupation and location. The reform agenda, according to the FME (2007), is leveraging a combination of strategic human and

infrastructure capital reforms, aided by specific tactical interventions. The agenda includes the following;

1. Operation Reach All Primary Schools (ORAPS), a condition assessment programme aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public primary schools with a view of meeting their needs. ORAPS is a follow up to ORASS (Operation Reach all secondary Schools), successfully carried out over the last quarter of 2006. ORAPS is an exercise geared towards doing both qualitative and quantitative inspection of all primary schools in Nigeria;

2. Operation Reach All Secondary Schools (ORASS), also a condition assessment programme which is aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public secondary schools with a view of meeting their needs. ORASS was the first condition survey conducted by the ministry of education since its inception. 11,000 inspectors visited and inspected 14,543 secondary schools;

3. Ready to be Educated and Advance and Develop (READ), which is geared towards encouraging a reading culture among the youth;

4. Adopt-A-Public-School initiative aims to leverage stakeholders in education, particularly corporate organizations, to come together as partners, for the purpose of rescuing public schools and consequently restore them to institutions capable of delivering sound learning and aptitudinal education;

5. The Community Accountability & Transparency Initiative (CATI) seeks to get various institutions, civil society groups, town unions, etc involved in holding

UBEC, SUBEBs, Contractors and the various Ministries of Education accountable for Government disbursements at all tiers;

6. Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEI) is to advance Nigeria's economic growth through the maximization of human potential through excellence in vocational and technological training so as to develop the workforce and enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness;

7. Universal Basic Education Reform, aimed at meeting the 21st century national and international imperatives;

8. The PPP initiative will ensure the effectiveness of the Federal Government Unity Schools by bringing together various stakeholders in the education system to deliver innovative solutions to the problems of poor school management, academic under-achievement and poor utilization of public financial resources;

9. The Consolidation initiative will deliver the conversion all Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education into campuses of neighboring Federal Universities, thus improving the carrying capacity of the Universities, and satisfying the quest for University Education and degree certification; and

10. The ed.TAP initiative is to tracks the "products" of Nigeria's educational system to determine who they are, their backgrounds, capabilities and needs to inform a long-term strategic planning process for the education sector.

Other aspects of the reform include school feeding programme, and Girl- Child Education Programme.

While acknowledging the need for reforms in education generally, and for basic education in particular, there is the need to carry the along teachers who are indispensable stake- holders. The teacher could be regarded as the heart beat of any educational policy. Teachers need to be consulted and involved in the formulation and implementation of any reform policy.

They are the professionals on whose shoulders the success or failure of any brand of education reform rests. The universal and compulsory nature of the basic education programme means more teachers would be needed. They should be well trained and motivated. Teachers that are unwilling to reach out to other stakeholders may not be desirable. Awareness and involvement of the teacher is basic to the success of any reform in the education sector.

Available literature on the reform has not addressed the basic school teachers' awareness and involvement in the formulation and implementation of the reform. Thus, there is need to investigate the awareness and involvement of basic school teachers in the reforms with a view to suggesting relevant strategies for ensuring and enhancing the success of the reforms, especially at the Basic Education level

Purpose of the Study

The study is set specifically to;

- a. find out the extent of awareness of basic school teachers awareness of the basic education reforms.
- b. find out the level of involvement of basic school teachers in the formulation and implementation of the reforms.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' awareness of reforms in basic education?
2. What is the extent of teachers' involvement in the basic education reforms?

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey research type using the questionnaire for data collection. The population for the study was 2, 809 including the head teachers in Ilorin metropolis, out of which, a sample of 235 teachers was randomly selected. The instrument used for data collection was the structured questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was made up of 2 sections each containing 22 and 12 items respectively that elicit the respondents' level of awareness and involvement in the reforms.

The questionnaire was a four point liket type scale. The research personally visited the respondents to administer the instrument. A total of 255 copies of the questionnaire completed by the respondents were collected and analyzed. The respondents were required to tick (√) in the response that best satisfied their

level of knowledge to the items. The mean of 2 and above was used as an acceptable mean showing adequate awareness and involvement in the reforms. Mean scores between 1.50-1.99 were taken as low awareness and below 1.50 as no awareness and no involvement.

The responses were scored and the means calculated as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Mean Scores of the respondents on Awareness in Basic Education Reforms

Are you Aware	Quite Aware (QA)	Aware (A)	Low Awareness (LA)	Not Aware (NA)	Mean	Decision
1. Operation Reach All Primary School	52	63	54	74	1.8	L A
2. P 4 E	36	33	40	146	1.4	NA
3. READ	41	54	67	92	1.6	LA
4. Intelligent Society	42	40	38	135	1.4	NA
5. Ed TAP	32	32	48	143	1.4	NA
6. UBER	92	76	52	35	2.3	A
7. TQV & T.C.	32	33	30	160	1.4	NA
8. CATI	36	33	30	156	1.4	NA
9. ORASS	52	63	54	86	1.8	L A
10. School Feeding Programme	44	40	44	127	1.4	NA
11. The objective of the UBE	120	45	45	45	2.2	A
12. There will be regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objective	88	69	90	45	2.2	A

13. The UBE is nine- year programme	180	90	64	28	2.7	A
14. The implementation approached and strategies	32	33	32	95	1.4	NA
15. The MDG	32	36	28	96	1.4	NA
16. The EFA	60	33	34	87	1.6	LA
17. There will be regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE strategies	92	96	90	35	2.3	A
18. There will be regular monitoring evaluation of outcome	92	96	90	35	2.3	A
19. Workshop and seminars have been going on in the UBE	75	33	32	83	1.7	LA
20. Funding arrangement for the UBE scheme	32	51	30	95	1.5	LA
21. The structure of the UBE scheme	36	45	30	91	1.5	LA
22. The rationale of the reform	16	57	38	93	1.5	LA

Table 1: Mean Scores of the respondents on Involvement in Basic Education Reforms

Are you Involved in	Much Involved (MI)	Invol ved (A)	Less Involv ed (LA)	Not Involv ed (NA)	Mean	Decision
1. the UBE planning	12	12	16	120	1.1	NI
2. the school Feeding Programme	24	15	24	112	1.29	NI
3. The formulation of the objective of the UBE	16	21	40	104	1.27	NI
4. meetings of stakeholders in UBE	36	18	16	112	1.35	NI
5. The implementation approached and strategies	16	21	40	104	1.27	NI
6. the implementation of MDG	16	21	40	104	1.27	NI

7. the implementation of EFA	16	21	40	104	1.27	NI
8. the monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objectives	36	18	16	112	1.35	NI
9. the monitoring and evaluation of the UBE strategies	36	18	16	112	1.35	NI
10. the monitoring and evaluation of outcome	36	18	16	112	1.35	NI
11. the workshop and seminars on the UBE	24	21	32	106	1.36	NI
12. the funding arrangement for the UBE scheme	12	15	18	119	1.21	NI

Result

From the analysis, it is observed that out of the twenty two- item initiatives related to basic education, the objective of the UBE, regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objective, UBE strategies, outcome and UBE as nine- year programme, the respondents are aware of UBER while they have low awareness on ORAPS, CATI and ORASS. From the analysis, the respondents have no knowledge of Intelligent Society, Ed (TAP), TQV & T.C. P4E, MDG, and School feeding programme. Out of the twenty two items in the section A of the questionnaire, only six of the items had their mean scores 2.00 and above, the rest had their mean scores lower than 2.00.

Out of the twelve items in the section B of the questionnaire, all the items had their mean scores lower than 1.5. The result showed that the respondent were not involved in the education reforms.

Discussion

The study revealed that teachers have little or no awareness of the details of the reform. In addition, the teachers were not involved in the conception and planning of the reforms. This finding is in line with Emmanuel (2007) who had rightly observed that the stakeholders including the teachers were not properly carried along. The findings showed that the teachers, who were expected to translate the reforms into reality, were not involved in the planning and even in the evaluation of the reforms. The findings also tally with the submission of Patric (2000), who stated that many laudable educational initiatives have failed because of the teacher factor. This due to the fact that no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Since the education reform programme is an expression of the strong desire of Government to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry, every thing necessary should be done for the successful implementation of the programme. Primary school teachers should be fully involved in all the planning and implementation. It

is therefore necessary that the teacher who will directly implement the reform should be properly briefed and involved. The teacher should know what the reform is all about, including their objectives, approaches and strategies used.

While there is urgent need for education reforms in Nigeria, all the stakeholders, especially the teachers, must be carried along in its conception, formulation and implementation. The first place to start is the training and retraining of teachers. Kwara State has not recruited primary school teachers for a long time now. Colleges of Education in the state, and other institutions have been producing teachers who are not employed in the classroom. Recruitment of teachers will help in creating the awareness. Workshops and seminar should involve teachers in the villages not just those in the towns and cities.

In teaching, condition of the teacher presupposes the learning condition and success of the learners. A good working condition of teachers is that condition that keeps them happy, regular and highly dedicated to their duty, and this should be given topmost priority. Another strategy is to professionalize teaching with a clearly articulated code of conduct, disengage all quacks and recruit qualified teachers to replace them. It is only happy and highly motivated teachers that can successfully help in the implementation of UBE initiatives. Above all, the entire Nigeria populace should patriotically assume ownership of the programme by participating actively in the execution.

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