FUNDING BASIC EDUCATION: CHALLENGES FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS

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INTRODUCTION

It is on record that Nigeria was doing well economically, especially through the agricultural sector until when it shifted base to the oil sector which glory did not stand the test of time due to global pressures and uncertainties.

The concomitant effect is the inability of the successive governments of the day to successfully meet their financial obligations in all sectors of the economy of which education is a vital component.

In effect therefore, the educational sector of the economy has to compete favourably with other sectors to get its own share of the scarce 'national cake' so as to keep the stone rolling. It continually suffers some set backs, especially in terms of funding the system adequately to cope with the demands of the moment.

Records of history were very clear on how the educational sector and indeed the beneficiaries of the educational programmes across the board enjoyed all the possible 'goody goodies' for the educational systems of the country during the good all days of the agricultural sector and the oil boom of the 1970s

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRIOMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

The primary education system is one of the four (4) recognised sub-systems of Nigeria education system. Others are pre-primary, secondary, and tertiary education systems.

The successes of the secondary and tertiary educational systems rest squarely on that of the primary educational system. Hence, the quality of primary school will definitely have significant impact on the quality of the secondary and tertiary educational systems.

According to the NPE document of 1998, the general objectives of primary education are to:

1. Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.
2. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
3. Provide citizenship education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society.
4. Provide character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes.
5. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment.
6. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity.
7. Provide basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

In order to actualise the above lofty objectives, the government;

(a) Provides free and universal primary education with effect from September 1976 with the plan to make it compulsory throughout the country.

(b) Prescribed in primary school curriculum such programme/activities such as:

- Inculcation of literacy and numeracy;
- The study of Science;
- The study of social norms and values of the local community and of the country through civics and social studies;
- The study of health and physical education;
- The study of moral and religious education;
- The study of domestic science and agriculture, etc.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the primary school system, the government established the then National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) and later the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBE).

FUNDING OF PRIOMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

The funding of the primary educational system, like that of the other educational systems in Nigeria, suffers some financial predicaments due to the dwindling economy of the country. There is also the problem of continued annual increase in enrolment. It has reached a stage where the government alone cannot bear the entire burden of funding the entire education system in the country. In effect therefore, the government has to look inward and outward to source for funds to complement the shortfalls from the government circle.

Today we have donor agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank contributing financially and materially for the running of the Primary Education System in Nigeria. Inwardly, there are also substantial financial and material contributions made by communities to their local schools through such fora as PTA, School Committees, NGOs and CBOs.

There is no doubt in the fact that adequate funding is crucial to the success of primary education system in Nigeria as it will enable the system to:

- Build suitable teaching facilities:
- Employ and retain qualified and experienced staff for the teaching of all the courses satisfactorily:
- Provide adequate welfare services to both the staff and the pupils:
- Purchase all the relevant consumables for effective teaching and practical exercises
- Maintain and sustain all the teaching resources and the school environment successfully.

CHALLENGES OF RUNNING, MAINTAIING AND SUSTAINING PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM.

Some of the major challenges of running, maintaining, and sustaining primary education system especially in the present Nigerian circumstances and within the framework of global outlook include:

- How can the primary education system seek, within the prevailing Nigerian circumstances, to have the desired impact on the country's societies, communities and the school system?
- How can the primary education system set out to successfully provide the moral, social and intellectual capacity for its beneficiaries to cope with the exigencies of the time?
- How can or should it create and provide new knowledge badly needed for the overall development and progress of the society?
- How can or should it provide a sound basis or foundation to provide the desired capacity for the creation of more financial, moral, and material wealth for and in the nation?

These challenges will no doubt be surmounted when the following are put in place in the primary schools, be it public or private:

- Improved health standard and sanitation
- Assured comfort of the pupils and the teachers
- Assured provision for enrolment of school age outside the formal system of education.
- Improved access (e.g. roads, culverts, gutters, etc.) to schools, especially in the remote rural areas.
- Assured equitable distribution of school facilities among the schools.
- Assured equity in the distribution of basic education amenities to the pupils in the school,

- Increased motivation and commitment opportunities for teachers and pupils.

THE ROLE OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN COPING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

You need not agree more with me that there is the need for all the stakeholders of primary education system to collectively and severally contribute financially and materially towards the success of the system. By and large, the stakeholders of primary education system include:

- **The consumers/beneficiaries of the primary school**: - These are the pupils who enjoy the educational services provided
- **The participants in the primary education**: - These are the teaching and non teaching staff of the school. They must be involved and committed to educational excellence and success.
- **Host community**:- The community in which the school is located and from where a majority of the pupils enrolled in the school come from. There could be community representatives such as the CBOs and PTA.
- **Employers of labour**: - These are those who provide employment opportunities within and outside the host community.
- **The government**: -These are the federal, state and local governments.
- **Interested Individuals and institutions**: - These include the friends of the school, philanthropists, donor agencies (such as UNESCO, UNICEF) professional association such as the NUT, NGOs, NLO. etc as the products of the schools may eventually join their folds at one level the other.

The extent of the financial and material contributions to the primary education system will largely have an impact on the success or other wise of the primary schools. Thus, in order to ensure that the primary education system stakeholders have much impact on primary education, their efforts could be focused on some of the following vital areas of concern in the primary schools:

- Instituting staff welfare packages and motivational schemes/projects such as the provision of motorcycles, bicycles, grinding machines, etc. on revolving loan basis;
- Purchase or donation of land for the school;
- Provision of supplementary readers, reference books, etc. to the school library or resource centre;
- Provision of sports and games equipment facilities and trophies to institute inter and intra school competition;
- Creation of educational programmes for drop-outs from the formal school system;
- Provision of equipments for girl-child or boy-child craft centres;
- Provision of school stationeries, classroom furniture and equipments;
- Provision of First Aid facilities in the school;
- Building community libraries or resource centres in or near the school for easy access by the pupils and the teachers;
- Renovation, rehabilitation and completion of the school buildings;
- Provision of access roads, especially to rural schools;
- Provision of electricity, toilet facilities and portable water for the school;
- Involvement of the stakeholders in any other activities of priority to the school that would allow for easy access to basic education of the school age children in and around the school community.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is evident that the quality of primary education system has a great impact on the quality of secondary and tertiary education system. It is also a fact that the funding of primary school system cannot be left alone in the hands of the government, especially considering the poor state of the economy vis-a-vis the continued annual increase in enrolment. What is urgently required to keep the primary education system afloat so as to have positive impact on other systems of

education in the country and consequently the society at large, is for all the stakeholders to contribute, collectively and severally, financial and material resources for the survival, maintenance, sustenance, and overall success of the primary education system in the country.