

DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION OF SKILLS IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT FOR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

BY

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ABSTRACT

The international community has adopted some ambitious targets for human development. Governments again gathered at the World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand to reaffirm the human rights to education. The Universal Basic Education aims at universalizing access to education, but the 2004 and 2005 Millennium Development Reports indicated that outcomes have fallen far short of ambitions, and Nigeria may not be able to meet most of the goals by the 2015 target. The Dakar framework for action pledges to expand learning opportunities for every child of school age. Unfortunately, with the deadline now just few years ahead, the world, particularly Nigeria is off track on many of the targets. Attainment of the goals has been uneven and too slow to achieve the targets. The right to education is a human right, but inequalities in opportunity for education represent a formidable barrier to the attainment of UBE goals. The paper finally advocates that educational managers should possess the skills of human resource management; financial management skills and the development of appropriate skills in the use of ICE tool in staff management and development for the Millennium Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth (20th) century marked the fourth transition into a planetary civilization, increasingly linked together by fast communications, rapid transportation, information technology and computers. With the end of the first millennium, we have already stepped into the twenty first century. As Nigeria has stepped into the twenty first century, it has become necessary to take stock in order to x-ray and to present the facts and the problems of the new millennium as they are. Nigeria has been criticized as a nation that has already had her share of both extensive and intensive development and growth in the scale of activities, but lacked adequate managerial skills. This extensive growth has made Nigeria vulnerable to harmful phenomenon and disturbances that are

quickly translated to all parts of the globe, (Munasinghe, 2007). Thus, Nigeria needs to re-order her priorities and programmes in order to meet these few challenges, new issues, problems and tasks that she is already encountering, which the present systems of thoughts, knowledge and actions may be incapable of resolving (Odigbo, 2001). Such issues and problems have resulted in the United Nations Millennium Declaration which was adopted in September, 2000 at the largest ever gathering of heads of states, committing countries both rich and poor to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. The Millennium Development Goals according to Igbuzor (2006), include those dedicated to eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

These Millennium Development Goals which are time-bound accelerated development targets to be achieved by the year 2015 provide a unique opportunity for developing countries to attract huge assistance from rich nations. Nigeria with other third world nations, mainly Africans, is to at least, achieve improved coverage of these goals within the time-frame. The fact however, is that many countries are underdeveloped with precarious development indices, says Igbuzor (2006). He noted that more than 1.2 billion people or about 20 percent of world population live and survive on less than us \$1 per day. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few people. The UNDP in its 1998 report documented that the three richest people in the world have assets that exceed the combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the 48 least developed countries. Nigeria by nature is blessed with abundant human and material resources, which are grossly ill-managed. This is evidenced in the lack of relevant skills necessary to manage the available resources in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), improve people's lives by expanding their choices, freedom and dignity. This is the goal of all the development processes. This paper focuses on the Millennium Development Goals, the situation in Nigeria, that is, the disappointing progress on the MDGs with particular reference to the Universal Basic Education (UBE), the development and acquisition of relevant educational management skills for the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

The international community has adopted some ambitious targets for human development. The targets which are time-bound involve procedures to guarantee equal employment opportunities. The objectives set out under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include the halving of extreme poverty, a two-thirds reduction in child mortality, universal basic education, promotion of gender equality, improvement of maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing global partnerships for development. In September, 2008, governments from around the world gathered at a United Nations Summit in New York to reaffirm their commitment to the MDGs. It has been realized that without fundamental change, the development goals will not be achieved and this prompted the UN Summit.

The situation in Nigeria is not different from the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. It has been observed that the attainment of the goals has been uneven and too slow to achieve the targets. The Nigeria Millennium Development Goals reports of 2004 and 2005 have shown that it is unlikely that Nigeria will be able to meet most of the goals by the target year, 2015 especially the goals related to eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS. Surely, the Millennium Development Goals are the world's time-bound and quantitative targets for addressing extreme human deprivation in its many dimensions. The reports further stated that if the current trends continue unabated; it will be difficult to achieve the time-bound targets by the year 2015.

UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)

In response to the 1990 Jomtien, Thailand, World Declaration on Education for All, Nigeria launched her Universal Basic Education (UBE) in September, 1999. The UBE is intended to provide greater access to the universal, free and compulsory form of education to all children of school age from primary level to Junior Secondary School level (NPE, 2004). Obanya (2000) defined universal basic education as the level, type and form of education needed to build firm roots for literacy and numeracy, to inculcate basic life skills and more importantly, to consolidate the skills of learning and how to learn. Experiences have shown that the problem of Nigeria is not with policy formulation, but with policy implementation.

Almost two decades have passed since governments gathered at the World Conference on Education For All (EFA), in Jomtien, Thailand to reaffirm the human right to education. They set bold targets but outcomes fall far short of ambitions. In 2000, the 164 governments assembled at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal and adopted another set of ambitious goals on education. The Dakar Framework for Action pledges to expand learning opportunities for every child, youth, adults and meet the targets in six areas by the year 2015. With the deadline now just few years away, will it be different this time around? However, accelerating progress towards education for all is one of the development challenges of the early 21st century. The right to education is a human right. Unfortunately, just five years to the deadline, the world is off track on many of the targets, that is, most of the targets will be missed and the pledges made at Dakar will be broken.

Accelerated progress towards education for all, with strengthened focus on equity will definitely change the picture. But governments must act with a renewed sense of urgency and political commitments. In his work Munasinghe (2007), noted that more than 115 million children of primary school age do not go through proper schooling. He contended that these children are mostly those from poor households, whose mothers often have no formal education in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper shall now turn attention to the issues at stake, which bother on the development of educational management skills for Millennium Development Goals and Education for All Goals. According to UNESCO (2009), the targets set for reducing child and maternal deaths, reversing the spread of infectious diseases, reducing poverty will not be attained unless governments act decisively on education.

DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR EFA GOALS

Educational management emphasizes skills in execution and performance. Such skills include the following:

Personnel Management Skills

People are the most important resource of any organization. It is people that hire, supervise and manipulate the other three Ms (money, materials and methods) in order to achieve organizational goals. Personnel salaries and emoluments constitute 80 percent of every institutional budget. How the staffs are hired, supervised, motivated and evaluated should be of prime importance to any educational manager. Since

recruitment and selection supply the lifeblood of the organization, the acquisition of the relevant skills for doing these is important to ensure that only the people with the correct abilities, skills/competencies are hired and put in the available positions.

Another important skill to be developed by human/personnel managers is the orientation of new employees. It is a programme designed to help the new workers get acquainted with the organization to ensure a productive beginning on a new job. It involves job description, specification of roles and provision of basic information needed for job evaluation and progression. Staff development is another skill widely emphasized by managers which focuses on the managerial activities intended to improve the performance of teachers in any school system. Research and technological development can cause employees' skills to become obsolete. A good manager should identify the training needs of his teachers and develop them through on-the-job training. Again, staff motivation is of prime importance in personnel management. Poor remuneration, irregular payments of staff emoluments, and poor working conditions are demoralizing and indeed the sources of dissatisfactions and frustrations, which do not augur well for effective teaching and learning in schools. This is so because these conditions make it extremely difficult to recruit and retain teachers at all levels of education (brain-drain). Aguti (2009), pointed out that Nigeria loses about 1,500 professionals to other countries yearly on account of poor conditions of service with their destabilizing consequences on education, especially on UBE. According to Bennell and Akyeampong (2007), many primary school teachers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa have low levels of job satisfaction and, are poorly motivated. They pointed out that many tens of millions of children' .are not being taught properly and are not receiving even a minimally acceptable education. The unavoidable conclusion is that most schooling systems are faced with what, amounts to a teacher motivation crisis.

Financial Management Skills

Educational institutions cannot exist and prosper without adequate financial provisions and management. The Federal Government Implementation Guidelines (2000) has stipulated that the main goal of Universal Basic Education is to universalize access to basic education. But this laudable objective cannot be achieved without prudent financial management. In any financial endeavour, economy and efficiency are the twin ingredients of success. Managers of education should possess the skills to ensure that the overall financial control system is made more stringent to counteract fraud, which

poses a threat to the success of UBE and its sustainability. They should possess accountability and prudent financial management skills to a sustainable level for the attainment of the goals of universal basic education. Regular evaluation and auditing are two mechanisms that guarantee transparency in financial management and they call for reliable criteria and tolls. From time to time a statement of actual income and expenditure should be drawn up, compared to the budget estimates and discussed with stakeholders in the interest of accountability to ensure that funds are neither misappropriated nor embezzled. This is the surest way to ensure that government's huge investment in UBE is used to attain the intended goals.

Development of Leadership Skills

While discussing management concepts and techniques, it is important to shed some light on leadership issues such as management styles and practices. At least five leadership styles are generally observed in educational management, with one or two being dominant in an individual manager. The styles are autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, bureaucratic and charismatic styles. Fullan (2001), Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2008) have argued that good leaders must be able to act in different styles at different stages of the decision-making process. But changes in roles and styles of management can indeed be a big challenge for each individual manager. The unavoidable conclusion is that since no single leadership style meets the demands of every situation, educational managers should develop the skills of switching instinctively between styles according to the people and work they are dealing with. Thus, the new profile that is expected from effective leaders is to be able to address successfully both the tasks and human aspects of their schools.

Development of Skills in the Use of ICE Tools in Staff Management

This section deals with the use of Information and Communication Technology tools in teacher management. The tools have quite broad applications of which heads of educational institutions would need to develop appropriate skills, to use them in ways that suit their schools. The Human Resource Management System (HRMS) is one of the new challenges that we are already encountering in the new millennium. One very important advantage of adapting the computerized Human Resource Management System is to reduce the workload of carrying out personnel management activities manually. Secondly, where the staffs delivering the programmes are themselves widely distributed, monitoring, evaluation and other records-keeping functions can easily slip.

In this situation, HRMS can be invaluable in ensuring that standards are maintained across the entire institution, where the staff may be located (Aguti, 2009). By so doing the pledge to expand learning opportunities for every child, youths, adults and meet the 2015 target is redeemed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the New Millennium Goals is to provide access to universal, free and compulsory form of education to all Nigerian children of school age to meet- the 2015 targets. The following recommendations have been advocated in view of the disappointing progress on the Millennium Development Goals:

1. If Nigeria intends to meet the UBE goals and fulfill one of the Dakar commitments, it would need to recruit and train additional teachers and ensure that the majority of the teachers are professionally qualified. Most schools lack teachers, and governments are unwilling to lift ban on employment of teachers. Even the available ones are not sufficiently motivated to be effective.
2. Teacher educators themselves must not only be professionally qualified but must also be prepared to equip students and serving teachers with new competencies. The new profile that is expected from today's teachers is to shift from traditional knowledge transmitters producing obedient and passive students, into that of facilitators and igniters of students' curiosity and inventiveness.
3. The overall financial control system should be made more stringent to counteract fraud, which poses a threat to the success and sustainability of UBE. This can be achieved through constant evaluation and auditing.
4. Ambitious long-term goals supported by realistic planning and sufficient medium to long-term budgetary allocations to ensure progress in access, participation and completion in primary education should be fixed. This is so because more children are entering primary school, but too many fail to complete the cycle.
5. Managers should develop the capacity to measure, monitor and assess education quality, in areas that affect learning conditions (infrastructure, textbooks, class sizes), processes (language, instructional time) and outcomes.
6. Political leadership should be sustained to reach education targets and tackle inequality through clear policy.

CONCLUSION

The problem of development is a global challenge and international community has adopted some time-bound ambitious targets for human development, one of which is to universalize access to education. In response to the declaration of education for all in Jomtien, Thailand, Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education in 1999 which pledges to expand learning opportunities for every child of school age. The situation in Nigeria indicates that the attainment of the goals has been uneven and too slow to achieve the targets. The right to education is a human right, but inequalities in opportunity for education represent a formidable barrier to the achievement of the UBE goals. Removing the barrier will require political leadership and practical strategies that tackle the underlying causes of disadvantage. The aim of good governance in education is to strengthen accountability, social justice and fairness of appropriate skills in the use of ICT tools in staff management. The Human Resource Management System (HRMS) is one of the new challenges that are already with us in this new millennium, which skills need to be developed. Furthermore, strengthening the commitment to the education goals set out in the Dakar Framework for Action is one of the most pressing priorities. In Nigeria, the goals have been uneven, too' slow to achieve the targets and only good educational governance, political Will and patronage can save the gentleman's development agreement from being 'Off' track on many of the targets.

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