



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT AS AN ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY SOURCE OF FUNDING BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

The paper discussed the roles of communities as alternative and complementary source of funding basic education in Nigeria. The roles of communities in the provision and management of basic education in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. The Universal Basic Education Commission, in realization of the indispensable role of community participation in basic education delivery, initiated in its reform programme, various ways through which community mobilization can be harnessed for sustainable development. Some of these, as highlighted in the paper, include building schools, recruitment of teachers, payment of salaries, provision of furniture, water supply, toilets, etcetera. The paper concludes by reiterating the fact that communities should be seen as partners in progress, always seeking ways of complimenting the efforts of Government.

**Keywords:** community, support, funding, basic education, Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

The provision of education in Nigeria has for long been a collective responsibility of the three – tiers of government that is, Federal, State and Local Government. However, the basic education sector has failed to yield the expected quality end result, due to short supply of relevant teaching and learning facilities that characterized the sector. It is common knowledge that public primary and junior secondary schools account for greater percentage of schools' annual enrolments. But public schools lacked adequate

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teaching and learning materials, physical structures, committed and qualified teachers, conducive classrooms, adequate furniture, etcetera to cater for the increasing enrolment and ensure standard and achievement of objectives. Thus, conditions for teaching and learning in public primary schools have completely deteriorated. More so, public schools have turned out to be a big liability to the Nigeria educational system as they have been indeed transformed into conduit pipes through which bureaucrats and politicians have systematically siphoned public resources.

The greatest challenge is that government efforts in education are not enough in meeting the needs and aspirations of Nigerians. All these have invariably resulted in the quantitative and qualitative collapse of productive educational pursuits and achievements. Hence, the number of pupils and students turned out yearly are ill prepared for higher education or productive challenges right from the primary to university levels (Abbass & Babajo, 2003). In other words, members of local communities in various parts of Nigeria are complaining bitterly about the decay in basic education sub-sector. Specifically, poor quality of the graduates from basic education schools have become a source of worry to almost every community member. The government is blamed for not funding education adequately as it refused to commit the 26% of its annual budget to education as advocated by UNESCO.

Equally, when the Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched in 1976, for example, there was no adequate plan to achieve the enshrined objectives in all respects and at all levels. These include the projected number of pupils/students, number of schools/classrooms needed, the number and quality of teachers required and other infrastructures and instructional materials. While the UPE was meant to be universal, free and compulsory, it practically did not become free, universal or compulsory, in spite of the government public pronouncement and enormous expenditure appropriated. The under funding of the education sector has had a negative effect on access and equity and the desire to reduce regional disparities in the country. It has become clear to all tiers of government that communities must be involved actively in the implementation and funding of educational programmes.

Basic education is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 15 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). Since the rest of education system is built upon it, the basic level of education is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. Most communities prefer government with its greater resources, to provide all the facilities and staff for their schools. When funds are short, communities may decide to bridge the gap so that their children do not suffer. Sometime, the problem is worse than a shortage of materials in the school; for instance, the absence of any school at all, in this case, a community may resort to self help to get something started hoping that the government will take over the school later. Most community support seeks to bridge the gap between what the government can provide and what the community wants to be provided, community erect extra-buildings, employ teachers, buy books and so forth to complement what already exist (Bray, 2007; Yusuf, 2013). It is often argued that one of the most important ways of improving school quality and making education more

responsive to local and national needs is to work out effective modalities for community support in funding education, programme design and implementation. This paper, therefore, carefully discussed the community support as an alternative and complementary source of funding basic education in Nigeria.

### **1.1 Historical Perspective of Community Support to Education in Nigeria**

Community funding of education in Nigeria is historical. Prior to Nigeria's independence, religious organizations and individuals established and maintained schools through charities and communal contributions. Even in the colonial and post-colonial era, local communities and the Christian Missionaries played a very significant role in the provision of education even though the level of community support for education had some regional and even local variation. The take-over of schools owned by missionaries and voluntary organizations in the seventies significantly reduced the role played by local communities in the provision of education. However, the massive expansion of educational system in the seventies and early eighties and the economic crisis of the late eighties which narrowed the government's revenue base have rekindled interest in community financing of education (Bray, 2007; Muhaamad, 2011).

However, one of the manifestations of the educational challenges in Nigeria that has engulfed the nation since the early eighties is under funding of education. This is because the funds allocated by the government at all levels of education continued to decrease tremendously. The consequences of this is the deterioration of existing teaching and learning facilities and the inability of governments at all levels to build or setup adequate facilities that can accommodate the increase in enrolment in primary and junior secondary schools (Bray & Lillis, 2008). The under-funding of the educational sector has had a negative effect on access and equity and the desire to reduce regional disparities. Thus, in the past decades, there has been a conscious attempt by the Federal Ministry of Education to mobilize all stakeholders, particularly the communities, to participate in the funding of basic education, the implementation of the educational programmes, the design and implementation of curricula and the monitoring of curriculum delivery and the management of schools (Bray & Lillis, 2008).

Similarly, a stakeholders' conference was organized in the year 2000 with the aim of mobilizing community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the organized private sector to participate more effectively in the provision of education, particularly basic education. However, despite these laudable efforts of the Federal Ministry of Education, there has not been an adequate provision or response from the communities in the country in terms of contributing to the funding of education, building classrooms, schools and providing instructional materials. The standard response from the local communities in some states, especially in the north is that provision of modern education is the sole responsibility of the three tiers of government. But, given the fact that the government's revenue base is weak and the allocation of funds to education has over the years decreased in real terms, it is unlikely that government will be able to provide adequate access to education for all children from the age of 6 to

15 years in the country. Consequently, the existing regional disparities in education between the north and the south in Nigeria will continue to widen and will not be properly addressed (Umar, 2002).

Adequate funding is central to education. Unless sufficient resources are made available for the payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, the provision of books and equipment, the building and renovation of classrooms, laboratories, hostels and sport facilities, the provision of qualitative education to the children and young people will remain untenable and the students' poor performance in public examination will continue unabated (Umar, 2002). Governments in developing countries, Nigeria for example, continue to shoulder the burden of educational financing alone. This continued to a time when many governments became increasingly conscious of the high cost of education due to the global economic depression (Bray & Lillis, 2008).

The concept of community support is very much embedded in the traditional system of education. The child is made to appreciate, right from the on set, his roles as a member of his immediate and extended family as well as that of the community at large. The new born child immediately becomes the child of everyone in the household. Many parents have no objection to taking on the children as wards, or apprentices in the field of agriculture, marketing and medicine. Age groups generally engaged in communal work by helping other members of the group in clearing, planting, harvesting or helping the community in road building. Everyone is his brothers' keeper (Fafunwa, 2002). The concept of community funding of education refers to the financial contribution communities make to education. It also include the provision of non – monetary support in the form of building materials, instructional materials and equipment, land, mobilization and sanitization of their members on particular educational problems or issues. Financial contribution to education by communities usually take the form of cash donations, fees, levies, payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, paying for some over head costs such as water and electricity bills, etcetera.

## **1.2 Basic Education in Nigeria**

Basic education is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 15 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012, p.11). Since, the rest of the education system is built upon it, the basic level is key to the success or failure of the whole system. Basic education begins at around age 3 for the majority of Nigerians. Students spend six years in primary school and three years in junior secondary school. They graduate from junior secondary school with Basic Education Certificate. Subjects taught at the basic level include mathematics, English language, Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic knowledge studies, agricultural science, basic science and technology, civic education, home economics and one of the three main indigenous languages and cultures: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. At the primary school level, primary school pupils are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into the Federal and State Government Secondary schools, as well as private ones.

Basic education has been receiving high priority or great attention right from the time of the missionaries through the colonial government to the present day (Amadioha, 2011). Before 1976, education policy was still largely shaped by the colonial policy of the British Colonial Period. In 1976, the Universal Primary Education programme was established. This programme faced many difficulties and was subsequently revised in 1981 and 1990 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The Universal Basic Education (UBE), came as a replacement of the Universal Primary Education and intended to enhance the success of the first nine years of schooling. The UBE involves 6 years of primary school education and 3 years of junior secondary school education, culminating in 9 years of uninterrupted schooling, and transition from one class to another is automatic but determined through continuous assessment. This scheme is monitored by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and has made it "free", "compulsory" and a right of every child (Aminu, 1990; UBEC, 2011). Therefore, the UBEC law section 15 defines UBE as early childhood care and education. The law stipulates a 9-year formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skill acquisition programmes, and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl child and women, Al-majiri, street children and disabled people (Aderinoye, in Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014).

The goals according to FRN (2012) which form the basis of basic education in all the states of the Federation are to:

- a) inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
- b) lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- c) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- d) mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- e) develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- f) give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; and
- g) provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

### **1.3 Role of Communities in Funding Basic Education in Nigeria**

The roles communities play in the provision and management of education can not be over emphasized. More often than not, communities continuously intervene in the learning processes of the entire educational system in terms of financial contributions designed to support schools, teachers and students/pupils. Communities however, establish and fund schools for the general good. This aspect increasingly strengthens the communities' capacity, sense of identity and purpose. The efficacy of community support in education is hinged on bringing members from all facets and diversities of life, together for the attainment of a common objective. In addition, community participation in

education brings about stability amongst community members thereby transforming the entire environment physically, socially, economically and politically. (Abbass, 2012).

Community groups are often among the key sources of funds to schools. They are mobilized to carry out given tasks by leaders in the community, such as local chiefs. There are many schools in the country that have been built by community groups. Within communities, there may be individuals who also decide to help one or more schools on a significant scale, sometimes, business people wish to be seen as philanthropists and may contribute in the same way as a community group. Such contributions should be welcomed, but because of the idiosyncrasies of individuals, a system of accountability needs to be enforced particularly where business people operate schools for profit (Federal Ministry of Education, 1993).

Tahir (2006), states that the community as an integral part of the Education for all crusade, is made receptive to the school and the education of the child through encouragement and support for self help projects. The UBE reform programme has realized the indispensable role of community participation in basic education delivery. As a consequence, the UBE programme has initiated various ways through which community mobilization for participation can be enhanced in a sustainable way. The greater the support given by the community in the full cycle of educating their children, that is, decision about building a school, recruitment of teachers, payment of salaries, relevance of the curriculum etcetera, the higher the rate of participation of the children in school.

Government in Nigeria has been unable to single handedly provide qualitative education to all who demand it due to its financial implication. It is therefore apt to invite the people to participate actively in running basic education schools especially in the area of providing support for educational services (Muhammad, 2011). With widespread quality education in the community, enhanced social capital amongst members of the community will be guaranteed. In addition, this enhances desirable change, greater participation with no group left out. For a community to support education, they must be encouraged in order to achieve these multiple objectives. Communities, through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other institutions should not be undermined but encouraged and supported. They are always directly engaged in education specifically designed to promote quality education accessible to all members; irrespective of social status. This is aimed at minimizing conflicts and designed to promote the value of education for all community members (World Bank, 2005).

### **1.5 Areas of Basic Education that need Funding Support from the Communities**

Various aspects of schooling and the educational system in Nigeria are in what could be described as “deplorable condition”. In view of this situation, local communities in the country, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of every benefits derived from education, serve as government partners in the provision of basic education in their respective community. Okam (2002) opines that community support in the running of schools takes a variety of shapes. And the major aspects of such support activities were the efforts being

made by community members to execute various construction works in schools and promoting the welfare of teaching personnel. Muhammad (2011) equally pointed out that other areas of educational activities that require funding support from the local communities, may include purchase and supply of instructional materials for schools, payments of rents for teachers, construction of additional new structures such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and school fencing.

The communities may also provide funds for the provision of portable drinking water, well equipped first- aid kits and the electrification of schools. Nigeria is largely varied geographically. Some parts like those of northern Nigeria are arid and semi-arid lands. Other parts like those of south and western regions are wetlands. Most Nomad (Fulani) families that live in the north encounter difficulties that counteract government efforts to achieve education for all Nigerians. Their life styles are not conducive to learning as they often move from one location to the other in search of wetlands and water for themselves and their livestock (Achoka, 2007); as they move on, they take their children along with them. It is difficult to have their children attend basic education as required.

Another related concern is children who are born to parents that are forced to become exiles subsequent to land/tribal clashes in Nigeria like is the case in Benue, Jos and Southern Kaduna. The northeast region also has been adversely affected by the Boko Haram terrorist group. Many families not only inhabit the region but also depend on it for their livelihoods. The most affected lot are children whose parents are either send away from their homes and/or are killed; many schools were burnt and destroyed. They remain unsupported for any useful education. Therefore, the community can provide funds to renovate and rebuild schools; provide security to complement the government security agencies. According to Yusuf, Alasoluyi and Bawa (2017), community members can also volunteer as teachers to teach pupils/students, this include mothers and fathers, step parents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups—all participating in goal-oriented activities in the school.

### **1.6 Importance of Community Support in the Funding of Basic Education**

The importance of community support in the funding of basic education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria as a developing nation requires the full support of all stakeholders in the education; to which the local communities formed parts, for sustainable development in the education sector. Community support in funding education is important for many reasons. It aids in the ability to identify local education issues and to develop strategies to resolve barriers that impede access and retention and compromise quality. Community support in the life of local schools also helps to ensure the relevance of the curriculum and its delivery. It can also be an effective component in monitoring the process and outcomes of education at multiple levels (Nores, 2010; Yusuf, 2012). In resource-constrained settings such as Nigeria, community support can also serve as an effective means of advocating for and mobilising the resources needed to move towards a high-quality public system of education throughout the country.

The resurgence of the need for community support in the funding of education represents a return of the earlier model of community's participation in educational financing. In traditional African societies, various communities were responsible for the training of their young ones, before the advent of Islam and Christianity (Fafunwa, 2002). Epstein in Muhammad (2011) indicated that part of the importance of community support to education, is that it gives both family and community members greater opportunity to participate in the wide range of educational activities and assume key roles and responsibilities in schools improvement efforts, including participation in the schools' decision making process. Epstein further added that the benefits of community's involvement (which include financial) in the activities of basic schools are better attendance, high graduation rates and greater enrolment into higher education.

Similarly, Henderson and Berla (1994), have indicated that community support to education in the form of parent/families financial involvement in school activities has for long been given priority by community members in the United States of America (USA), because of the belief that such support has the tendency to increase students or pupils academic achievement, Muhammad (2011) reported that in India, in 1976, the provision and financing of elementary education was made a joint responsibility of the states, the centre and the local communities. The emphasis was to increase access, reduce dropout and to improve retention and quality in the elementary education sector. To put more emphasis on the importance of community funding support to education, the Federal Government of Nigeria did not hesitate in involving the private sector as well as the local communities in the management and funding of basic education. This has been fully reflected in the guidelines for the implementation of UBE programme. Essentially, the local communities are expected to provide funds for initiating and executing specific projects in primary and junior secondary schools within their localities. The communities funding support should be used to provide relevant human and material resources for successful administration of basic schools.

Strong, sustained community support in the form of financing and management of basic schools can enhance transparency and accountability in the education system and promote a sense of ownership (Dayaram, 2011). Growing recognition of the need for communities to support education is now spurring policy makers toward a more demand-driven approach in which policies and programmes are based on communities' needs and expectations. Community support can take different forms, ranging from parents sending their children to school, to active participation in school-related meetings, assisting with school construction and supporting teachers in achieving positive outcomes (Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005). As such, community support constitutes an efficient strategy for achieving objectives such as improved access and quality, voicing community-specific needs and objectives, developing the curriculum collaboratively with school authorities, reaching marginalized groups, creating accountability and ensuring sustainability of programmes that are implemented (Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005).



### **1.7 Factors Affecting Community Support in Funding Basic Education**

In every attempt to provide support service by an individual or group of individuals such as organizations or communities, there are bound to be factors that may serve as bottle neck to such attempts. In view of the forgoing, Muhammad (2011) pointed out that in the Southern part of Nigeria, communities efforts in rehabilitation of schools was never without one form of hindrance or another. Instances were found where some community members will refuse to contribute and in some cases contributions were not accepted from members on the ground that they are not encouraging. Equally, many instances were found in which donations made by communities in form of cash or materials were never appropriately utilized. More so, lack of adequate enlightenment of the community members by policy makers on matters relating to school-community relation, is a strong factor militating against communities support to education.

Another factor that affects community support in funding basic education is poverty. This puts a particular burden on poor parents, who are also expected to contribute to the building of facilities, payment of teachers' salaries and management of primary and junior secondary schools. Little or no financial support comes from the category of such parents. Poor children have no choice but to attend overcrowded schools or stay at home if no affordable service is available in the vicinity. In some cases, hunger prevents children from attending schools even when their fees have been paid (Mitu, 2015). Usually it is parents with low education levels and those living below the poverty line who do not enrol their children in schools. A combination of ignorance and poverty also prevents communities from partaking in education, which provides a head start and a solid foundation for the development of life-long learning of their children.

## **2. Conclusion**

Community support plays a very key role in ensuring quality and sustainable education. In essence, community support in funding basic education is expected to remove all obstacles that hinder access to education by giving the community opportunity and indeed the right to actively and directly participate in all facets of educational activities. This reflects the fact that expanded education brings greater democratic power to the community, which equally generates equality and in turn provides a foundation for justice, equity and fairness amongst all spectrum of humanity. Therefore, it can be inferred from the literature reviewed that there are critical aspects of basic education that needs funding support from the local communities. This basically means that members of communities should identify those aspects of basic education (such as purchase and supply of instructional materials for schools, payments of teachers salaries, construction of additional new structures such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, school fencing, provision of portable drinking water, well equipped first-aid kits, electrification of schools, etc.) that require funding support for rapid improvement of basic schools located within such communities.

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