

CHALLENGES FACING THE REALIZATION OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG`s) IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The importance and linkage of education to the development of any society is well known. It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education. The delivery of education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect, compounded by inadequate attention to policy frameworks within the sector. The implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is affected by corruption, gross inefficiency, wastefulness and duplication of projects in the same areas by the Federal government and donor agencies. This paper therefore examines the challenges facing the realization of MDGs in 2015 and what need to be done in order to achieve the set target for quality education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education , educational Reform, Nigeria

Introduction

Education constitutes the core of human development. It is a vital tool for transformation and key to the sustainable development of a nation. Education is the most crucial instrument for empowering young people with knowledge and skills, which in turn provide them access to productive employment.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Declaration has two of the eight goals devoted to education. They are goal 2 (to achieve universal primary education) and goal 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women).

Over the years, Nigeria has expressed a commitment to education, in the belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form a basis for accelerated national development. However, regardless of the controversy surrounding education in Nigeria; it is very crucial to

the development of the community and nation. There are inequalities in access to education. Millions of poor people and their children are excluded from the processes and outcomes of education (Otiye, 2006).

Education is crucial for the achievement of the MDGs. Attaining the goals of eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability are predicated on sound education. The acquisition and dissemination of the requisite knowledge and skills, their effective application to address challenges that cumulatively result in sustainable development are highly dependent on a strong education system.

Millennium Goals and its Objectives

The ability to acquire and utilize knowledge and skills effectively is the key to the growth and development that will propel Nigeria to become one of the 20 largest economies by the year 2020. A modern and vibrant education system entails wide ranging activities that would ensure functional, qualitative education of the highest possible standards at basic, post-basic and tertiary levels. The primary goals to achieve this include providing access to quality education at all levels, improved learning and teaching infrastructure, according greater importance to science, information technology, technical, vocational education and training.

The positive social impacts that the implementation of the MDGs can make in the lives of Nigerians were considered by the International Financial institutions (IFIs) in giving debt relief to Nigeria. With the current State, the Nigerian government score sheet is unimpressive.

Challenges of MDGs on Education in Nigeria

The real challenge that militates against the realization of the MDGs is those of policy implementation because adequate budgetary allocations have been made by the government. The implementation of MDGs has been characterized by deeply entrenched corruption, gross inefficiency and wastefulness (The Guardian, 2009).

Corruption has been a major problem because it makes the country unattractive to investors as it raises the cost and risk of doing business in the country (UNDP,2004). In addition, there is the problem of duplication of projects in the same areas by the Federal

Government, and many donor agencies.

The delivery of education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect, compounded by inadequate attention to policy frameworks within the sector. There are a lot of challenges facing Nigeria and making it difficult for good quality education that is empowering and capable of bringing about sustainable development to be provided. The greatest challenge facing education is inadequate funding by federal, state and local governments, to the extent that funding has been in response to conditionality imposed by international financial institutions.

It has been documented by UNDP (2005), that if the current trends continues, the target of achieving universal primary education by 2015 will be missed by at least a decade. There will be 47 million children out of school in 2015, 19 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Forty six countries are going backwards or will not meet the target until after 2040. These countries account for 23 million of the 110 million children currently out of school in developing countries.

Nigeria is daunted with poverty and economic underdevelopment which coupled with poor administration, lack of political will, etc. have made its yearning towards achieving the MDGs in 2015 very unrealistic. It is good to state here that despite the present challenges to the realization of the goals, the country has sufficient resources needed to meet the MDGs target by 2015 but what is of utmost importance and require for this to materialize is for the country's leadership to overhaul its conceptualization and implementation of policies and programmes to meet the 2015 target (NPC,2007).

According to the UNDP Human Development Report on education in Nigeria 2008-2009, the adult literacy rate is 64.2 percent which indicates that about 50 million Nigerians are unable to read and write. This level of illiteracy combined with poor educational quality and standards are antithetical to the rapid economic growth required for the actualization of vision 20:2020. Adult and non-formal education must be given greater impetus to enable this large segment of the population to acquire functional literacy that would make them contribute more effectively to national development.

The infrastructures in schools, including those in the higher institutions, are dilapidated. The adverse learning conditions in schools include paucity of teaching and instructional materials, absence of adequate infrastructures, as well as over-crowded classrooms. The hygiene and sanitary conditions are also critical and have been identified as contributory to the effective retention and participation of girls in education, particularly in some parts of the country.

The quality of education is of considerable concern using the achievement of candidates in WASC examinations as a yardstick. In the recent past, less than 10 per cent of the candidates have obtained the minimum of five credits including English and mathematics and this trend has continued even with the examinations conducted by the National Examinations Council (NECO) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Conclusion

The issue of funding is a major challenge in addition to serious impediment in access to UBE intervention and Education Trust Fund (ETF). The main issues that need to be addressed during this plan period is working towards complete access to education by all school-age children and to implement measures that would improve access to post-basic and tertiary education. Providing opportunities for professional development of existing teachers, training and recruiting more qualified teachers is very imperative. Creating the appropriate learning and teaching environment with all the requisite equipment to improve quality and standards that are necessary in the overhaul of the education system to reposition it for the critical role it must play in enabling the attainment of the Vision.

Suggestions on what need to be done

- All children should have access to quality education within an equitable system. Schools should be places where children's rights especially those of girls, are respected. By attending school, children can acquire the confidence and knowledge to better access and make use of information that can improve their lives. The dignity and self-confidence gained can help them to challenge discriminatory and biased gender roles and relations.
- There is need for implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act and ensuring that all forms of user fees are abolished.
- There is need to promote child friendly and teacher friendly school environment.
- Provision of infrastructures such as classrooms across all levels would ease overcrowding, increase access and reduce pupil/teacher ratio.
- Enhance the efficiency, resourcefulness, and competence of teachers and other educational personnel through training, capacity building, and motivation.
- Re-establish and enforce guidelines for standards and education quality assurance.
- There is need for tracking of resources to ensure proper, adequate and accountable utilization of resources budgeted for education.

- Improvement of teacher quality through employment of professional and qualified teachers, in service training and retraining and implementation of the teacher salary structure.
- There is need to enhance the competence and performance of teachers, education manager, and other education personnel through quality pre-service training, continuous development programmes and motivation.
- Government should establish credible and efficient institutions for proper public resource management, while the existing ones need to be strengthened. The imperative of this endeavour is to ensure efficient and proper utilization of public resources with the overall objectives of preventing or minimizing waste.
- To achieve the MDGs in 2015, there is need for transparency and accountability of these institutions and entrenchment of good governance and rule of law.

Although, the Obasanjo's government economic reform (NEEDS) is commendable .We need to rise up to the challenges and change the course of events in Nigeria and put education in a right footing, That is the only sure way to sustainable development.

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