

IMPLEMENTING NON-FORMAL, SKILLS AND APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE): THE ROLE OF EXISTING TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discusses both the existing indigenous technological and modern institutions and their importance in the implementation of the apprenticeship aspect of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The indigenous technological institutions include pottery, spinning and weaving, leather work, sculpture, tying and dyeing, carving (etc.) locations and centres while the modern institutions include, among others, the Technological Incubation Centres such as the Leather Research Institute, (Zaria), the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, (Oshodi-Lagos) and so on and so forth. It is argued that the services of these institutions are important in the UBE programme implementation activities.

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which was finally launched by president Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th September, 1999, aims at achieving the following specific objectives, among others:

- developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
- reducing drastically the incident of dropout from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality, and efficiency);
- catering for young persons who, for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling as well as, other out-of-school children/adolescent, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and

ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life.

Pursuing one of the objectives of the UBE which is developing an aptitude for practical work which encompasses the "non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths who have not had the benefit of formal education"-could be successfully implemented by engaging the services of some existing indigenous and modern technological institutions.

Existing Technology Institutions in Nigeria

It is note-worthy that there are many existing technological institutions in Nigeria that can be used to implement this aspect of the programme judiciously. This aspect stresses concepts lifelong education and developing an attitude of practical work. The existing technological institutions in Nigeria, especially, the indigenous ones are as old as Nigeria itself. Nigerians have been living with them and they are regarded as the simplest forms of technological institutions. They contribute to meeting the basic needs of their immediate community, using and develop local, natural and human resources, including capacities in autonomous technological development; overcome economic dependence and promote self-reliance. These are compatible with the culture and knowledge of users.

Some produce tools and goods from local raw materials; while some repair and recondition equipment, engines and machines. Examples of the indigenous technological institutions are pottery, spinning and weaving, leather work, carving, sculpture, (gari processing), dying and (etc) while the modern technological institutions include auto-mechanic, auto-panel beating, auto-rewinding, auto-painting, battery making and reconditioning, vegetable oil extraction, and others.

These institutions have got "infrastructures and facilities" which are referred to as the physical and spatial enablers of teaching and learning. The indigenous ones have workshops of various sizes and equipped with working tools. The facilities of the modern technological institutions include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, playfields (etc) that meet at least minimum standards for promoting and implementing the UBE programme.

The most important of the enablers for the programme are the human resources. In other words, it is mandatory to have qualified and experienced personnel. I want to say here that there are abundant qualified and experienced people in these institutions. Many of the staff working in our modern technological institutions are either graduates of Universities of technology or polytechnics. The people that manned the indigenous institutions can read and write and have acquired more than enough experience they could use to cope with training of apprentices.

Already, many of them do organise training programmes for their members and the public. For example, the following training types have been discovered and considered representatives of those various institutions.

They are among others:

- Apprenticeship
- On-the-job general training
- Purchasing and supply, (etc)

It is established that these institutions have produced men with skills and experience in technological knowledge and administrative abilities.

Using the existing Technologies to Implements UBE

From the foregoing, it is clear that Nigeria governments (Federal, State and Local) do not need to look outside Nigeria before they can train their citizens. This is to say that there are sufficient and capable institutions and human resources that could be engaged in the implementation of the apprenticeship training aspect of the UBE programme.

Training people through apprenticeship in the existing technological institutions have some advantages:

- the services of on-the-ground manpower will be maximumingly utilised;
- some of the infrastructure and facilities that are redundant will be gainfully put to use;
- the government will need to spend little money on the training of the people. Instead of being sent abroad, they will be trained locally and government will thereby be conserving fund.

What is therefore needed is for governments not only to recognise those institutions but also to pay due attention to them by assisting them optimally. The government should set up planning committee, which would serve as a body to coordinate the activities of these institutions. They can train the trainers with the facilities on the ground. They can become consultants on the ground. They can become consultants to the government as experts to help in drawing plans for various trainings workshops.

Documentation and publication of the activities and facilities of the institutions:

First and foremost is the need to be aware that there abounds in Nigeria both indigenous and modern technological institutions whose facilities could be used to successfully train and retrain adolescents and youths through "out-of-school non-formal programmes for updating the knowledge and skills...." they have already acquired. The problem is that some of these institutions and their facilities are not documented. There is therefore a need to document these institutions, facilities and their activities. It is by doing so that the larger

society could benefit from the services of these institutions. Dissemination of information on these institutions, and their services at the moment the basic are hindrances. It is therefore expected that provision should be made for the publications of manuals, guides and other types of publications to cover all their activities and facilities. Such publications should include "Teach-Yourself-Series".

The manuals, guides and "Teach-Yourself-series may be in any format (print and non-print) books and electronic. These include slides, films, videotapes, diskettes, CD-ROM, etc. the production should be funded by the government and be distributed free and widely too. Copies of these publications should be deposited in some recognized libraries. A central point/library may be established to coordinate these activities. The point will provide an effective publishing base for books, manuals, guides and journals.

It will be of high importance to mention some of these existing modern technological institutions. They include : Technology Incubation Centre, Leather Research Institute of Nigeria, Federal Institute of Industrial, Research Oshodi, etc.

(1) **The technological incubation centre (TIC)**

The Technological Incubation Centre is a new approach to nurturing the start-up of small and medium-sized enterprises which includes providing selected entrepreneurs with all the services they need to develop their ideas from conception to commercialisation TICs will assist the existing indigenous technological institutions (small and medium sized enterprises) to consolidate and expand their activities. The Technology Incubation Centres are providing incubator space, enterprise counselling, shared secretarial support services, start up financing and assistance with product development and marketing. TICs organise workshops and train people through apprenticeship processes. The TICs are promoting the indigenous industrial development by strengthening Nigeria's industrial base at the small and medium enterprises.

(2) **Leather Research Institute of Nigeria, Zaria**

The Institute is conducting research into production and products of leather, provide information and advice relating to the production and products of leather; These include utilization of local tanning materials. The institute trains extension workers for the improvement of hides and skins and leather technology.

- Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO) conducts research on the utilisation of real raw materials in manufacturing industries; conducts research on the modification of industrial processes and technology to suit local conditions and available raw materials; provide technical, analytical and consultancy services to existing and planned technological industries.
- Another important existing technological institution that I would like to discuss here because of its relevance to the topic is

Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited. The Company is adequately equipped with machines and equipment for the manufacture of spare parts and fixtures of various specification. These machines are manned by well-trained engineering staff, skilled technicians and artisans. The company undertakes repairs of equipment within the system as well as for outside agencies. Facilities are also available to train technicians and artisans through apprenticeship-programme.

Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) no doubt at all, is a laudable programme that must be implemented. It is a moral duty of all the players and operators of the UBE to effectively provide necessary training programmes and facilities. The existing facilities, which are already on the ground, must be harnessed and documented. Technology is a field concerned with the development of technology, its application in industry, and its impact on the economic, social, cultural, and political life of a nation.

In order to harness these institutions and their facilities and activities effectively, a body such as the National Centre for Technology Management Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, could be used to do the work. One of the objectives of the centre is the recognition of technology as a vehicle for the overall development of a nation. It has on ground facilities to document those institutions and ability to disseminate information on the institutions.

Specific curriculum should be designed for the programme of the apprenticeship. The curriculum must provide for skill renovation that will be readily accepted by the recipients. The curriculum must recognise the demand of the current economy and its social effects. The curriculum must be structured to accommodate all the concerned individuals in the target group. A distinction should be made between skills development primarily in schools, those developed at the workplace and those developed for out-of-school and out-of-workplace situations. This is because this consideration has an effect on the ages of the apprentices, the duration of the training, and the educational background, etc.

The training through apprenticeship will reinforce the nation's workforce and offer new potentials for work opportunities. It is simultaneously a key agent of structural change.

In conclusion, it becomes very clear that education and training constitute the most important factors in improving a country's human resources. It is therefore advisable that UBE programme must be carried out free of political biases and ethnic intentions. The government must give clear-cut recognition to the existing technological institutions in the operation of the programme. Emphasis should be on education for self-reliance and not for white-collar jobs.

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