

IMPLEMENTING THE UBE PROGRAMME: NERDC'S CONTRIBUTION OF THE LEARNING RESOURCES

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Introduction

The need to critically examine and discuss the philosophy, objectives and content of education at all levels in Nigeria led to the 1969 national curriculum conference. This conference did not only stimulate new ideas in the Nigerian educational system, it invariably culminated in the formulation of the National policy on Education and the inevitable need to design new functional and relevant curricula for the two agencies saddled with the responsibility of designing curricula, namely:

- i. Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CEASC) and
- ii. Nigeria Educational Research Council (NERC) would have to be determined.

The verdict was that the two bodies above and the two below, namely:-

- i. Nigeria Book Development Council (NBDC) and
- ii. Nigeria Language Centre (NLC) would have to be brought together to form an holistic body that would among other responsibilities develop curricula for Nigerian schools. This led to the promulgation of Decree 53 of 1988 (now the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council Act. Cap 302. The Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990) which effectively created the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

The objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which the NERDC has been able to provide learning resources in aid of the school curricula and the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

Function of NERDC

In line with the objective of this paper, a quick look at some of the functions of NERDC is relevant.

They include:

- i. encourage, promote and co-ordinate educational research programmes in Nigeria.

- ii. Encourage research into educational problems and for that purpose, undertake, commission, incorporate and finance such research project.
- iii. Compile, publish or sponsor the publication of the results of educational research particularly in relation to Nigeria educational problems, and popularize such results.
- iv. Promote the development of curricula at all levels of the educational system
- v. Develop new techniques and approaches to curriculum development.
- vi. Set up pilot curriculum projects in educational institutions.
- vii. Produce syllabuses and instructional materials.
- viii. Carry out studies in comparative curriculum
- ix. Develop and encourage the development of materials for various languages taught in schools.
- x. Develop and encourage the development of core books in Nigerian languages in cooperation with any other institution or organization concerned with book development.
- xi. Organize teacher education Programme for new techniques.
- xii. Formulate and implement a national policy on book development.
- xiii. Undertake and promote book development and local authorship ensuring the provision of adequate infrastructure facilities for book manufacture
- xiv. Establish and maintain a research and develop library where new educational books and other related publications may be deposited.

From the above listed functions, it is becoming increasingly clear that NERDC is indeed central to the total implementation of the UBE Programme. However, our immediate concern here is the provision of learning materials for the implementation of the UBE Programme.

NERDC Learning Material and UBE Programme

Learning materials are operationally defined here to include information print material used by either teachers or pupils and students in the learning process. They include textbooks, supplementary books, journals and other periodicals, ephemerals, teachers' guides, workbooks and syllabuses.

The Nigerian Educational Research & Development Council has developed and produced a sizeable number of these learning materials to implement the National policy on Education from which the UBE programme is derived. The learning materials are categorized as follows:

- i. Children story and picture Books
- ii. Curricula (pre-primary and secondary)
- iii. Instructional Texts (primary, JSS etc)

- iv. Teacher Education
- v. Journals
- vi. Occasional publications (occasional papers, Research reports, seminar reports)
- vii. Publications in population Education:-
 - Research studies in population education in Nigeria
 - Source books – Monographs, self-learning modules
 - Training manual for teachers
 - Supplementary teachers guide
 - Perspectives in population education
 - Population education newsletter
 - Posters.
- viii. General publications (NERDC publications 1996)
 - A comprehensive list is annexed.

Development of learning materials

A broad spectrum of experts from all parts of the country are involved in the development of NERDC learning materials. These include subject experts from NERDC, Universities and other tertiary institutions, examining bodies like the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Inspectors of Education and school teachers.

Basically, the writing of learning material are done in a workshop where participants meet in residence to produce a draft which are subjected to either internal critique or some external critique or both. (*Ivowi, 1995*). The workshops are usually in two stages i.e planning and writing workshop stage and the critique workshop stage. In the final analysis, the learning materials thus produced would have a high degree of reliability.

Efforts are usually made to ensure that all NERDC text books are “..... student – activity based and they usually integrate theory with practicals or with practice” (*Ikegulu and Okpala*). Similarly, the teachers' guides ensure by covering both cognitive and psychomotor objectives of education (*Ivowi, 1990*).

There are subsisting agreements between NERDC and some reputable publishers in Nigeria whereby the cost of production of some learning materials are shared at 50:50. The increasing cost of book publishing and the swindling value of government subventions have necessitated these agreements. The agreements are signed on one hand between NERDC and the co-publisher and on the other and between co-publishers, authors and NERDC. The publishers pay royalties directly to the authors and any other dealings are through the co-publishers.

Conclusion

As the major developers of curricula at all levels of the educational system, NERDC's tested learning materials will continue to be relevant. However, the wide extent of the UBE Programme demands further, commitment from NERDC in producing these materials for the effective implementation of the Programme.

References

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