

# THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION SECTOR

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# OBJECTIVES OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION

- In 2004, the government started the UBE, with the following objectives:
- Develop in the entire citizenry, a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- Provide free compulsory UBE for every Nigerian child of school age.
- Reduce drastically dropout rate from the formal education system through improved relevance and efficiency
- Cater for drop outs and out of school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civil values needed for laying a solid foundation for life skills.

# STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING UBE PHILOSOPHY

In order to achieve the tall objectives set for the UBE, all tiers of government – federal, state and local governments – contribute funds to it. This has made UBEC and SUBEB the most lucrative government agency in Nigeria today.

## WHY IT IS A CASH-COW

1. Funds are deducted from the federation account and put in the purse of UBEC.
  2. Teachers salaries are deducted at source from the accounts of local governments and paid to SUBEB purse.
  3. Contracts for building classrooms are available.
  4. Contracts for printing textbooks, notebooks are available.
  5. Contracts for educational aids are available.
  6. All sorts of consultancy works are done in the name of UBEC or SUBEB.
  7. There are opportunities for training and retraining of teachers and specialists in the basic education sector
- WITH THESE AND MORE ELABORATE STRATEGIES, THE UBE PROGRAMME IS SUPPOSED TO BE A GREAT SUCCESS.**

## IMPACTS OF UBE

1. Salary of teachers has become a priority. Only mismanaged states SUBEB can't pay such salaries.
2. More modern classrooms have been built.
3. Textbooks are made available and affordable in some (not all) states.
4. Teachers are being trained and retrained. Those who have no education background can easily acquire teaching qualification through cash programmes.
5. Teaching aids are being produced by experts, with funding from UBE.
6. Parents pay less to take children to school. So, school enrolment has improved.
7. We have more qualified (paper qualification) teachers in our schools.

## PROBLEMS FACING PRIMARY & JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. Rural schools are in very poor shape – without good classrooms.
2. After passing through UBE many children can still not read, write, communicate and demonstrate acquisition of skills needed for higher studies.
3. Quality of teachers has still not improved considerably. Teachers can't write duty reports, lesson notes and other forms of writing, though they claim to be graduates.
4. There is still the lack of textbooks and other instructional materials in rural school.
5. We still find children of school age on the street hawking or doing nothing.
6. In several states, we hear that teachers salaries are not paid regularly.

## PROBLEMS FACING UBEC (CONTD)

7. There are allegation of corruption involving school administrators.
8. Teachers don't show commitment to their work.
9. Instructional material and textbooks are sold to booksellers instead of being given to pupils.
10. False declaration of number of pupils in school so as to get funds from state government; sending false report.
11. Students are given false (good) results to provide the false impression that there is improved quality of education.
12. Corruption among teachers. They write answers to external exams for students at a fee. Therefore students are not serious about studying.

# THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN TACKLING THESE PROBLEMS

Basically, the problems outlined above show the lack of good governance and accountability in primary and junior secondary schools in spite of the huge investment in the sector.

That is, political leaders and school administrators are not doing enough to ensure proper management of schools.



# THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

There are two reasons why the media would need to come in here.

1. It's the duty of the media to hold government agencies, school administrators and other stakeholders accountable for what they receive funds to do.
2. Political leaders: ministers, commissioners, directors, etc work with documents from schools. Because inspectors are being corrupted, government officials don't have a complete understanding of what is on ground at schools. The media need to let them know.

# THE MEDIA

Today we talk about the media as to consist the **traditional media** and the **social (new) media**.

Each of them have their strengths, which if explored effectively can help in redress the poor governance and accountability issues raised above.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA:

This consists of radio, television, newspapers. They can do the following:

1. Monitor the budgetary allocations to UBEC and highlight the contracts awarded by the agency.
2. Investigate how the contracts have been executed. In many cases, contracts are awarded to politicians to construct UBE schools, provide textbooks, etc but they were never executed.
3. Highlight the state of primary schools in rural areas, in order to draw the attention of the authorities to poor state of facilities.
4. Report why many children of school age are not at school to see why the UBE strategies didn't capture such children.

## The role of traditional media (contd)

5. Report corruption in schools. Most times the media do not focus of corruption at the lower level. We only report corruption among political office holders. In other countries, teachers lose their jobs because the media report their misdeeds.
6. There are opportunities for undercover reporting of how teachers help students to write external examinations.

## The role of traditional media (contd 2)

7. It's good to trace how UBE books are distributed. Many bookshops stock these books which are supposed to be freely distributed to students.

8. In areas where teachers salaries are not paid, it is proper to investigate why.

9. There is need to report the way teachers are being trained and retrained at our colleges of education, the National Teachers Institute, the Open University, etc.

## The role of traditional media (Contd 3)

10. We should report schools where the best practices are maintained so as to show a good example to other schools.
11. Outstanding teachers should be given proper focus so as to make them heroes that other teachers can emulate.
12. We can do stories that compare states where the UBE programmes are successful with the states where the programmes are failing.
13. We can even do stories that compare how other countries run their UBE programmes so that ideas on how to improve Nigeria's can be brought to the fore.

# The roles of the social (new) media

Today we have twitter, facebook, instagram, whatsapp, linked in, etc, where citizen journalists are very active. I-reporting is encourage even by the traditional media. At Media Trust Limited, we encourage readers to send in photographs and their own stories, with the disclaimer that they didn't represent the opinion of the newspaper.

## The role of the social media

1. Teachers can post pictures of poor structures in their schools on the social media.
2. It is possible to use smart phone to do audio recording of examination malpractices and put on the social media.
3. Those who have documents of corruption can push them to online publications, who could post them on their websites. In this country, we have examples of such exposure that has led to the fall of government officials.
4. Students should be encouraged to assess their teachers. In some parts of the world teachers fear their pupils/students more than school administrators.



The role of social media (contd).

5. Nothing prevents a teacher from running a blog where he/she writes a diary of his experience periodically. This will help the authorities to know what teachers pass through.

6. Indiscipline at schools can be reported on the social media. Such reports have led to in-depth investigations that have caused the change of policies.

# CONCLUSION

The media has a great role to play, but today many are constrained by the business aspect of the media business, like adverts, special supplements, congratulatory messages of achievements of schools. Therefore, some don't want to rock the boat. But the journalist must not remove their eyes from the ball – holding the authorities accountable for how they spend our commonwealth.

**THANK YOU...**