

THE ROLE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Youth as the back born of any national development will play a very paramount role in educational development. The paper will make an evaluation of youth participation in educational development in Nigeria with particular reference to Jigawa State. The main objective of the paper is to develop a strong research in innovation of youth participation in educational structure of the state. However, the paper will make recommended that, youth involvement in educational development in Jigawa state in particular and Nigeria in general is highly important.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a concept like all other concepts. Education as meaning to give intellectual and moral training to an individual. It is seen as a process through which an individual is admitted into the society by being taught what is worthwhile in order that the individual might play his/her part well in the society (NTI, 2013).

Another view of education, see it as all the processes and means by which people using the human ability to respond to and interact with the environment, pass on from one generation to another, those aspects of their culture which they consider to be worthwhile (NTI, 2013). This definition recognizes the person as participating in his/her education through responding to and interacting with the environment. The environment covers all the agents of education namely; the home with the members of the family, outer society with older and peers, the school and its entire environment (NTI, 2013).

Rodney (1972), see development in human society as a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creative, self-disciplined responsibility and material well-being. Chinsman (1995), argued that, development is only meaningful if only it takes place among other conditions within an enabling political environment of good governance, (cited in Shittu, 2002).

Participation simply means the involvement of people in the process of identifying their needs in planning and in decision making of matter affecting their welfare. The involvement include the individuality of the person in community/society, the component of the situation, the situation itself relate with other persons (the Leadership and the resources) and the degree of fitness between the persons and situation (interaction).

Youth refers to being young persons or adolescence stage. To Oxford Advance Learner Dictionary of Current English (1969), youth refers to state or time of being young. The quality or state of being young. In another meaning, the period of existence preceding maturity or age. The whole early part of life, from childhood, or sometimes, from infancy to manhood.

The paper is aimed at examining the contribution of youth participation in educational development in Jigawa State.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF JIGAWA STATE

Jigawa state is one of the thirty six states that constitute federal Republic of Nigeria. It is situated in the north – western part of the country between latitude 11.00N to 13.00N and longitude 8.00 E to 10.15E. Kano state and Katsina state border Jigawa to the west, Bauchi state and Yobe to the northeast. To the north, Jigawa shares an international border with Zinder Region in the Republic of Niger, which is a unique opportunity for cross border trading activities.

The state has a total land area of approximately 22,410 square kilometers. Its topography is characterized by undulating land, with sand dunes of various sizes spanning several kilometers in the part of the state. Most part of Jigawa lies within Sudan Savannah with element of Guinea Savannah in the southern part. Total forest covers in the state are very much below national average of 14.8%. The socio cultural situation in Jigawa state could be described as homogeneous. It is mostly populated by Hausa/Fulani who were found in all part of the state. About 3.6 million inhabitant of Jigawa state. More than 98.9% follows Islamic religion in the area.

3. YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their own communities. It is often used as shorthand for youth participation in many forms, including decision-making, sports, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged.

In 1975, the National Commission on Resources for Youth in the United State defined youth Participation as *“the involvement of Youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others i.e. outside*

or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features of youth participation are provision of critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal”

In 1995, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) established a definition of meaningful youth participation involving recognizing and nurturing the strengths, interests and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for the youth to become involved in decisions that affect them at individual and systematic levels.

Common Wealth Youth Programme and UNICEF (2006), remarked “as there are many types of developmental process cultures and unique individuals in the World, participation is not any one phenomena. There are various definitions of participation, however, is that people are free to involve themselves in social and developmental process and that self-involvement is active, voluntary and informed”

4. MODELS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

There are various models of youth participation, which are examined below:

Jane and De Backer, (2002) presented the triangle of youth participation as:

- i. Challenge
- ii. Capacity
- iii. Connect

Hart’s, (1992) ladder of participation is a model that can be used when developing and working on youth participation projects.

Hart, (1992) states eight (8) steps on the ladder of participation as:

- i. Manipulation
- ii. Decoration
- iii. Tokenism
- iv. Young people assigned but not informed
- v. Young people are consulted and informed
- vi. Adult – initiated, shared power with young people
- vii. Young people lead and initiated action
- viii. Young people and adult share decision making.

Youth participation activities may include:

- Youth councils
- Participatory action research
- Youth lead media
- Youth targeted political organization

5. PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

There are many steps to be considered in itemizing the principles of youth participation. The following are considered as:

Step 1: Organizational commitment

- Support staff doing youth participation
- Allocate adequate resources
- Offer real roles and relevant issues to young people
- Value young people’s contribution
- Involve young people from the beginning to the end of the process

Step 2: (Create space for young people’s involvement)

- Acknowledge young people’s cultural beliefs and values
- Invite a diverse range of young people to participate
- Ensure participation opportunities are accessible
- Inform young people about opportunities and that they are under no obligation to participate
- Recognize participation is beneficial to young people

Step 3: Create a youth friendly environment

- Build positive relationships between your organization and young people
- Develop a sense of belonging and security for young people
- Creating youth participation is fun and challenging
- Providing young people with information about the issues and decision-making process
- Provide youth people with timely feedback about the decision-making process and how their input was used.

6. FACTORS AFFECTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In any educational policies and programmes, there is a need to establish channels and levels of participation. Management of educational organizations is therefore, not only the managers but a process which involves the ability of the manager to incorporate individuals and groups in the day to day running of the organization. Not all educational administrators realize that effective management is a concerted effort, which involves the ability to carry people along, each with his or her share of responsibilities, duties and roles. Garba (2002) opined that, liberal participation can be seen in the sense of encouraging all stakeholders to pick interest in the organization and facilitation of their active participation in the management of the organization. Fafunwa (1986) pointed out that, education in Nigeria today, is not only the biggest industry but also everybody's business. It is the only enterprise that touches the lives of every citizen, children, and adult alike. Accordingly every citizen should have a hand in the way and manner it is being conducted. Fafunwa (1974) citing the 1925 Memorandum of Education in British colonial territory mentioned that, education should be adapted to local conditions in such a manner as would enable it to conserve all elements in local tradition and social organization. There is the need to an educational policy that will take into account the separate and collective identities and inspirations of the various sub groups in the community.

Another problem hindering youth participation in educational policies is the failure to implement the National Policy of Education (1988) provision section 10(92). The paragraph states that "school systems and consequently their management and day to day administration shall grow out of their life and social ethics of the community which they serve.

In this paragraph, five cardinal principles have been outlined as the platform upon which the administrative machinery on the National educational system shall be based. One of the cardinal principles emphasized on close participation and involvement of the communities (youth in particular) at the local level, in the administration and management of their schools. Close participation and involvement of the local community in the management in the management of schools is only possible for only three reasons: first the determination of who should participate, secondly, the determination of the level and dimension at which they should participate and thirdly, who each individual and or groups should participate.

7. CONCLUSION

Youth as individuals and groups must first be identified as people that are expected to participate in the management of educational policies and programmes. It is important to note that at the local, state and federal levels, government should realize the commitment of participation in educational development. However, the paper reviews the importance of youth participation in educational development. It critically examines the performance and function made by the youth in educational development. The paper recommends that, there is the need for support and motivation for youth from the government and other non – governmental organizations to enhance the youth productivity and proper involvement of the youth in educational policies. There is a need for awareness and commitment from the government; this will lead to the solution of low level participation among the youth in educational activities.

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