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Educational Programmes for Economic Development of Rural Communities.

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Introduction:

Nigeria is typically of rural-urban background in terms of development. According to Bude (1985), rural communities are in many respects at a disadvantaged position with regard to essential services, access to educational institutions and quality of education. The provision of educational facilities for the rural communities are often regarded as a measure of making up for, and reducing the dominating effects of urban life on them. Rural education therefore focuses at the improvement of the rural standards and patterns of living, and also providing essential skills for self-reliance and productivity. Deriving from this focus, rural education can be seen as an organized, formal or informal learning programme designed with, and developed for the rural dwellers based on their needs.

This paper attempts to analyse the problems of the rural community educationally and to identify educational programmes that would help transform their disadvantaged situation.

Restricted Role of Education in Rural Development:

Rural education is associated with the development of the rural area. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria (1981) inserting role of education in rural development stated that:

The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development ... It is therefore, the wish that any existing contradictions, ambiguities and lack of uniformity in practices in the different parts of the federation should be removed to ensure even and orderly development of the country.

The need to place high premium on rural education arises from the fact that lots of known rural development oriented programmes emphasize agricultural production likening it to rural development. It is observed that the emphasis favours those in the agriculture establishments rather than the majority of peasants and tenant farmers who produce at subsistence level. The provision of rural educational opportunities have always been through the existing formal primary schools and non-formal agencies through continuing education or adult education centres. The limitation is however, such that programmes rarely satisfies the development requirements of the rural communities due to the non-adaptation to rural needs thereby placing schooling in the rural communities as counterproductive in relation to rural development.

Presently, rural development programmes are springing up with little or no contribution from formal schooling. The rural peasant and tenant farmers have been known to strive toward increasing personal income from agricultural activities through extension services of Agricultural Development Programmes, Cooperative societies and other non-governmental agency programmes. The knowledge of farming acquired away from the vicinity of the farmers through migratory working habit or labour mobility have been very significant. Studies on improved agricultural products reported by Lockheed et al (1980) revealed that some amount of general education was required for higher and better agricultural yields. This of course is true based on the skills that would be acquired through exposure to the rudimentary principles and practices of agricultural production. Utilizing rural education programme as a resident of rural

development calls for care to make it an integral part of the entire development process falling short of which a negative trend would be recorded thereby reinforcing rural migration to urban centres.

Education generally plays vital role in the rural development process through the complementary roles of some essentials identified by Mossier (1971). These essentials include:

1. incentives in terms of favourable agro-commodity prices;
2. access to markets, and establishments of new markets;
3. provision of transport facilities;
4. the supply of agricultural inputs and extension services; and the
5. institution of agricultural researches.

Availability of the outlined essentials would go a long way to stimulate education to perform its role as development family or.

Societal changes are very rapid, consequently farming is becoming rapidly developed with higher investment needs. This requires literacy skills and knowledge for better involvement and for the educational constituents to appreciate in value. Suffice it to state here that transiting from an economy of a subsistence pattern to the advanced and international market economy must go with the appropriate education programmes for making the people literate and independent in handling their personal affairs without influence from whatever source.

Causes of Imbalance in Rural Education in Nigeria:

The causes of imbalance in rural education in Nigeria are:

1. Negligence of schooling in the rural areas in terms facility provision and supervision.
2. The imported industrialized pattern of the present education system with no consideration of social, cultural, economic nor the environmental conditions in structure and programmes.
3. Misplacement of educational priorities by government agencies in charge.
4. Non-consideration of the Nigerian rural-urban background in educational planning and development.
5. The prime position of material wealth at the expense of education ^{places} placeless emphasis on utilizing education for development.

Rural Community Education Programmes to Counter Urban Domination:

Countering the domineering urban effects on the rural communities can only be achieved through decentralized and formalized educational programmes derived from the community through inputs of their educational and training needs. Such community-derived and based educational programmes will ensure the community feel of the role of education in rural development. The programmes can be viewed from three dimensions of:

1. the community derived and based primary education programme;
2. the non-formal education programme; and
3. the future directions for rural education.

Community-Derived and based Primary Education Programme:

Primary education is the foundation for future learning development protesting self-reliant and support rural development. It is the most abundant educational set up for the rural dwellers, the location notwithstanding. The rural dwellers hold primary education as the stepping stone for higher attainments socially and economically. Based on the foregoing, the community children should:

1. be given general education based on the existing, experiences and opportunities in the local environment;
2. be exposed to the rudiments of scientific thinking; and
3. during the learning process be exposed to the skills of observation, measurement, concrete representation and of drawing conclusions.

There would also be the need to establish rural education centres for the provision of integrated programmes and for feedback within local government levels. Figure 1 shows a model structure that could be adopted or adopted from.

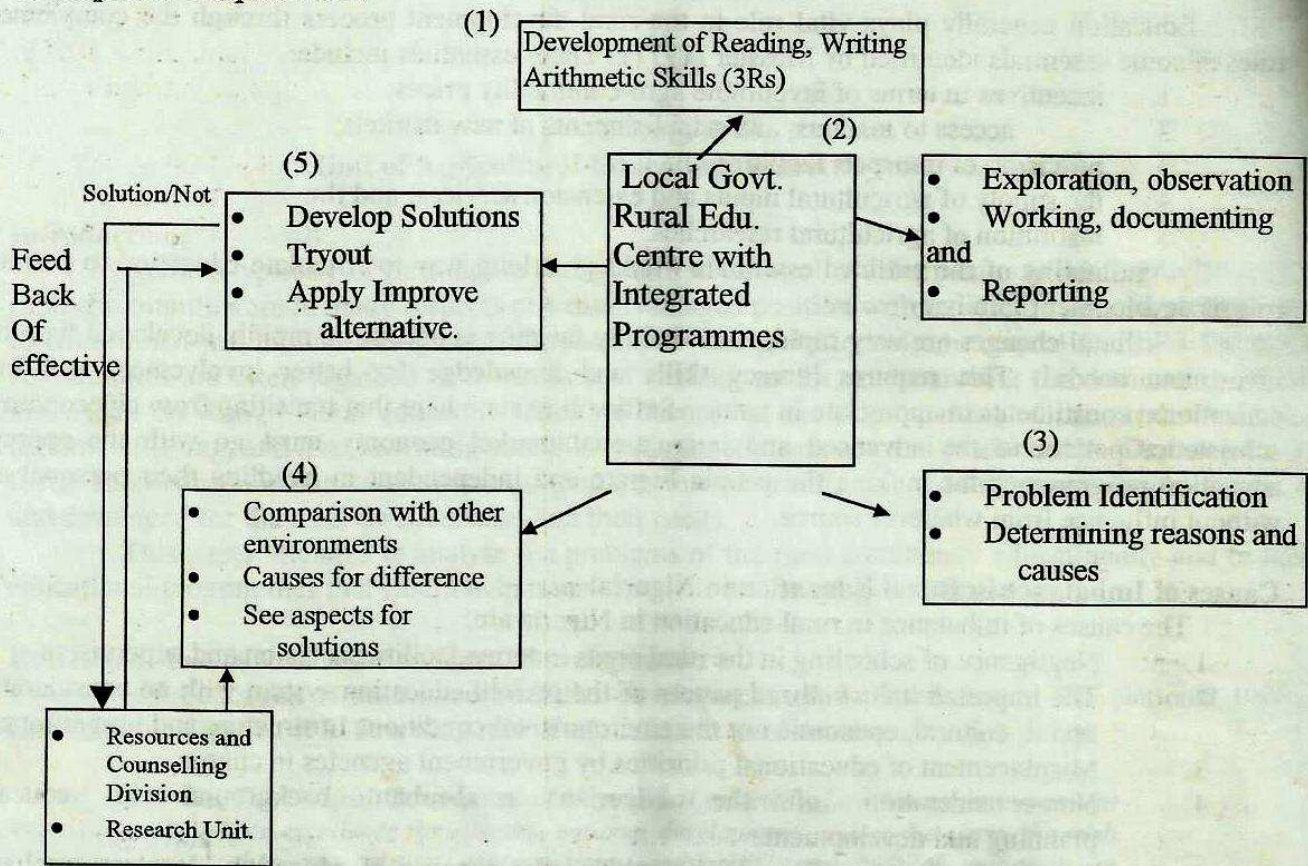


Fig 1: Structure of a Typical Rural Education Centre.

To achieve the counteracting effects of rural-urban drift, there is a need for modification of the imported educational system 6-3-3-4, by creating new structures and curriculum based on the typical Nigerian rural-urban background and circumstances. The reform will of course 'Ruralize' and 'Vocationalize' education. Ruralization of education explains the organized education derived from the rural background and meant for the development of the individuals and rural environment. The objectives would include:

- (a) creating the consciousness of personal identity among the rural dwellers;
- (b) shortening the social and economic gap existing between the rural and insignificant number of urban elite; and
- (c) making schooling more relevant to the practical and economic needs of the people.

Vocationalization of education explains the introduction of skill development programmes into school programmes based on identified occupational areas with a view to making the recipients of the training self-employed. But rural schooling in Nigeria makes no provision for job skills nor job opportunities after schooling; the possibilities of self employment is almost ruled out.

Actually the benefits of teaching agriculture in the primary schools can hardly be measured nor is there any evidence of contributing to the development of the rural vicinity of the schools. The need therefore for rurally derived and based primary education is not better than now to facilitate rural development pace.

The non-formal Education Programme:

Observation show that, the children of disadvantaged parental background in the rural communities have always been at the rear in terms of entry into school and are the first to drop by the way side. The situation justifies the need for reinforcing the non-formal education programmes considering its diversified nature, catering for wider interest groups. Non-formal and adult education in Nigeria consists of literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education programmes for youths and adults outside the formal school system (National Policy on Education 1981).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organisations have contributed in no small measure in providing learning facilities through the various government agencies to take the relevant and appropriate skills and knowledge to the rural dwellers for improved living standards. Every rural development initiatives spanning through (agricultural development, rural industrialization, health care programmes, women in development, family supports etc.) have elements of education through which varying knowledge, skills and information are differently transmitted to the target audience to ensure their successes.

an appraisal of the different programmes indicate that most of them are small in size and with restrictive coverage but however constitute the basis for reflecting on the rural development role of education of the non-formal form which should be given the pride of place in development planning.

Future Directions for Rural Education:

So long as there is the need for rural development in the entire development schemes in Nigeria, education is a basic ingredient at any level. Rural educational are generally limited by inadequate facilities and on government's priority list.

The situation calls for the identification of the rural community needs for developing a flexible network of rurally based educational programmes with a view of meeting the identified needs of the people.

Conclusion:

The existing imbalance in the development processes in the rural-urban Nigeria can be corrected with development oriented policy formulation, re-ordering of priorities and functional implementation and monitoring strategies. To succeed, other development inputs have to be put in place for the functionality or development-facilitating role of education.

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