

## IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN AFRICA

### Plenary Session

The lead paper for this topic was introduced by its author, Mr J. Lijembe. At the conclusion, open discussion commenced on the matters raised by the paper and the following points were made.

The reported departure of teachers during the period of political instability in Uganda from 1971 to mid-1979 did not lead to the closure of even one school. Managers, administrators and planners kept the system intact. It was only at university level that lecturers left in appreciable numbers.

The problems of poverty, ignorance and disease that afflict the masses are overwhelming. In this regard the evolutionary approach to the solution of these problems must be seriously questioned. The population itself should be seen as a positive resource that can be mobilised effectively.

Secondly, government funds should be used prudently. For example, the import of extensive and unnecessary goods should be stopped.

UPE is a human right for every child. Therefore, it is the duty of governments to defend this right.

Useful lessons can be learnt from other countries. For example, Ghana started UPE in 1951. Western Nigeria started it in 1955 and Eastern Nigeria in 1957. The failure of these attempt at UPE in Nigeria was a useful lesson to Cameroon. Cameroon's success in implementing UPE was due in large measure to such factors as:

- increments to teachers
- providing for the induction of students
- supplying instructional materials such as rulers, records and scheme books, chart paper, pencils, chalk etc.
- clear and consistent government policy to overcome proprietor and teacher resistance.
- community orientation
- keeping expenditure in line with gross national income expected from taxes
- levying the education tax from citizens one year in advance
- enforcing UPE through local traditions e.g. the chieftainship system can be rallied to give its support.

It was agreed that eventually it might be necessary to hold campaigns of public enlightenment to change attitudes.

Post-UPE activities depend on what planners expect UPE pupils to do. In urban areas there is little for them to do, but in rural areas, agriculture and other types of manual employment are available.

It was further observed that post-UPE programmes should include training for self employment and should be vocationally oriented. Rural reconstruction centres should also offer motor-mechanics and tailoring in addition to agricultural skills.

In summary, it was concluded that external aid should be used as a supplement to national effort. The country itself must be clear about its purpose. Action must be co-ordinated.

### Group Sessions

Mr Lijembe, as consultant and lead paper writer for this item prepared the following questions for discussion by groups.

1. What should be the role of the government, both central and local, and the community in the provision of UPE?
2. What strategies might prove effective for improving the planning and management capacities in terms of the training for:
  - (a) decentralisation of services?
  - (b) planners?
  - (c) managers?
  - (d) specialists such as inspectors, teacher educators, curriculum developers and research fellows?
3. How can quality in UPE be maintained in terms of:
  - (a) supervision by both head teachers and the national inspectors?
  - (b) purchases and distribution of teaching materials and equipment?
4. What are the pros and cons of external aid to the achievement of UPE?

### GROUP 'A' REPORT (Chaired by Mr C. W. Cole)

The group considered each of the questions and reached the conclusions noted below.

1. What should be the role of government both central and local, and the community in the provision of UPE?

The central government has a leading role as it has to

- provide policy guidelines for educational planners
- train and pay teachers

- co-ordinate services and programmes offered in other ministries
- educate the community so that it may offer services required for achievement of UPE.

In some countries it is the responsibility of local government to provide primary school buildings; where this does not happen, central government should provide these.

It is important to arouse community awareness that education is the key to development. Each community has pressure groups like - chiefs, teachers unions, church unions, church leadership, political leadership etc. Conviction and involvement of these groups in self-help projects will maximise efforts towards achievement of UPE.

2. What strategies might prove effective for improving the planning and management capacities in terms of the training of planners, managers and education specialists?

The group felt that since curriculum development takes place both inside and outside school, curriculum developers should

- evolve a mechanism that involves various groups of people
- incorporate techniques of integrating the formal and non-formal systems
- have a mechanism for collecting and evaluating data in order to identify short-falls in the system.

For further training of planners, managers and education specialists, international co-operation through travel fellowships and exchange programmes could be sought.

3. How can quality in UPE be improved and maintained in terms of supervision both by the headteacher and the national inspectors, and in terms of purchases, distribution and use of teaching materials and equipment?

Quality can be improved and maintained by retraining of headteachers, teachers and national inspectors to enable them to follow the new methods of instruction. This new approach gives cognisance to the contribution of "other specialists" e.g. health workers, agriculturalists, village masons etc. to the educational system. Their involvement in curriculum activities provides liaison between all government and village services and the formal system.

4. What are the pros and cons of external aid to the achievement of UPE?

External aid should be requested to supplement and augment local resources towards the achievement of UPE. Members preferred that such aid be without strings.

External aid is necessary for achieving UPE. Countries seeking aid should have a clear view of their requirements, the national input and the external input. However, countries need to be discriminating over the aid they seek and the aid that is offered.

## GROUP 'B' REPORT (Chaired by Mr J. Z. Banda)

The discussion aimed at highlighting problems that are likely to arise in implementing UPE and suggesting possible solutions.

### POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

#### 1. Financial Constraints

It was felt that the main barriers and constraints in the implementation of UPE are inadequate funds, rising costs and lack of national commitment reflected in low priority being given to UPE in the allocation of resources. In many countries in Africa neither central governments, local government, nor the community reveal active participation in implementing UPE.

Paradoxically, in some cases there is underutilisation of resources when, for example, school managers deliberately restrict enrolments in order to maintain high examination results.

#### 2. Parental Support

A decline in parental support for schooling is reported in some countries because increasingly it is being seen as having little effect on employment prospects. Primary school leavers are seen as being no better off than their peers who have not been to school. In some cases they are even worse off because they do not know the basic survival skills that children who do not go to school learn practically at home and at work with their parents.

#### 3. Political Constraints

Political instability may result in periodic change in national priorities which may result in inconsistent allocation of manpower resources.

#### 4. Provision of Learning and Teaching Materials

Unplanned and unco-ordinated production, purchase and distribution of materials result in delays and disrupts normal teaching in schools and quality of teaching often drops.

#### 5. External Aid

External aid either in the form of personnel or finance may be disjointed and unco-ordinated and its objective may not be achieved.

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. Central government funds and other resources should be allocated to UPE in a way that will reflect a high and practical commitment to UPE.

2. The implementation of UPE should be seen as an equal responsibility of both the central government, local government and the community. Central government should take the responsibility to educate the community about the latter's need to actively participate and contribute towards UPE.

3. To reflect the extent of national commitment and contribution to UPE, contributions by all sectors should be translated into measurable financial terms.

4. All national action must be co-ordinated. All government ministries must be equally involved in planning and implementing UPE. UPE must be free, if it is to reach rich and poor communities alike, but parents may contribute to the running costs.
5. School managers should be encouraged to perceive quality not just in terms of examination performance but also in terms of the positive effects which all students (including those who do not pass examinations) derive from schooling.
6. Educational planning has to be part of the management and administration of the overall national educational development. To allow for participatory planning, progressive, efficient and effective educational management, and administration, a comprehensive and well co-ordinated education planning unit with components at all administrative and management levels must be established and manned by properly trained personnel.
7. There should be planned and continuous recruitment of educational administrators. And there should be pre-service and in-service training and orientation of all education management personnel.
8. To ensure availability of up-to-date and appropriate statistical information necessary for progressive and effective education management, all education planning, management and administration staff must have orientation and training in the collection and processing of statistical material.
9. To maintain a high level of educational accountability and curriculum efficiency, the training of inspectors and education administrators should include curriculum development. This may also help to reduce problems of compartmentalisation of responsibilities.
10. To ensure wider coverage, there should be deliberate attempts to localise most of the staff training. Plans for a multiplier effect of staff trained outside the country may be achieved by obliging these to run courses/ seminars/workshops on their return.
11. There should be regular programmes for inter-country resource exchanges.
12. There should be professional inducement.
13. Interministerial participation in education and effective and efficient planning and follow up will ensure maximum use of even the minimal resources allocated to education.
14. Educational manpower planning and training should be geared towards national manpower needs.