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THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT OF URUE OFFONG/ORUKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at unveiling the educational advancement of communities in Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State in terms of assessing the numbers of senior Secondary School leaves that qualified for admissions into Universities within a period of years. Moreover the paper discussed the role of parents and the communities in the educational advancement of the area. It is shown from the paper that sat for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination within the period considered qualified for University admission. This deplorable result was attributed to indiscipline at homes, poor and inadequate educational and infrastructural facilities examination malpractices, partial commitment of teachers to duty and insensitively of the communities. It was therefore recommended that if there must be advancement in the community, everyone including government should rise up urgently to salvage the situation. A call for the establishment of boarding facilities in schools was passionately made.

INTRODUCTION

Education is indisputably seen and acknowledged as the bedrock of social and economic development of any society can grow beyond the extent of its educational input and development. That is why it is sad today to see almost everyone running into politics even when their educational foundation is questionable. It is equally sad that education and educational principles and practice are now politicized. It should be noted that without sound education socialization and consequently development in any community would be adversely affected.

There are fundamentally two types of communities, with respect to educational impact assessment in the country today; educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged communities. Unfortunately, the criteria for such dichotomy have not been clearly spelt out. The entire state, Akwa Ibom, is regarded as being educationally advantaged. This, of course, is without the predicaments and educational backwardness of some of the

communities in the state. Some communities are not only educationally disadvantaged but there has been evidence of retrogression.

This study wishes to focus on Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Area. The purpose is to assess the performances of students in secondary schools in the Area with respect to the number of students who qualified for admission into the universities from 1999 to 2004.

Students' performance as part of the state of the affairs will be used in discussing the role of the parents and communities in the educational advancement of the Area.

EDUCATION IN URUE OFFONG/ORUKO: THE STATE OF THE ART

Before discussing the role of the parents and the community in educational advancement of the Local Government Area, it could be useful to have a cursory view of the situation on ground in our schools.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Apart from the fact that there has not been a completion of the master plan with respect to building and equipment in most schools, the few that were initially acquired are worn out and have been very unattractive and unfit for educational institution. Teachers' quarters are not there. The few that are there are not fit for human habitation. The classrooms are with open windows and doorless. The floors are broken and in bits.

Teachers hardly have where to sit to do any serious work. Students lack writing desks. Many share desks while some stand to receive lessons.

LABORATORY AND LABORATORY FACILITIES

The schools lack separate laboratories for the sciences. A single room is used as a laboratory for physics chemistry and biology where it even exists at all. Laboratory facilities are scarcely available in most schools. The practice of often going about to look for laboratory items for use during WACE or NECO practical examinations is rampant. Many students leave school without knowing how to carry out simple experiments.

SHORTAGE OF MANPOWER

Although most schools outside the state capital experience this shortage, the situation seems to be worst in Urue Offong/Oruko Community Schools. I wonder how many of these schools have the number of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics teachers needed by them.

FUNDING:

Government seems only to be interested in the payment of teachers. However, in fairness to government, no government can single-handedly shoulder the responsibility of funding in schools. It should be a joint responsibility of government, parents and all stakeholders. But government should be more involved in community schools then payment of teacher's salaries. Funding, supervision and procurement of teaching/learning facilities as well as the development of infrastructural facilities should be added, prominently.

ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS

The attitude of teacher's work leaves much to be desired. Daily attendance in school, qualities of teaching and commitment to professional ethics have eluded some teachers. Some are seriously engaged in businesses outside the school system while those who seem to be regular to school hardly justify the pay they receive monthly. To some teachers, teaching has been a burden, a pass-time or a stepping stone to greener pasture. Traditional teachers of old and new difficult to come by, unfortunately.

PARENTS' ATTITUDE

Most parents do not care know what their children are doing in school. The children hardly stay in the house when they return from school, yet parents do not seem to say anything. Family control and discipline of the children seem to have broken down in most families in the communities considered in this paper. Female children can even bring in boys to their homes amidst their parents who will say nothing. Immorality is in the increase and the home environment is not conducive to learning. Parents are terrorised by their children that they cannot exercise control over them.

STUDENTS ATTITUDE

The events in the society do have so much impact on the students. The craze for political power and fact that school drop outs now become politically rich and influential through thuggery tend to

affect students zeal to excel in studies. In fact, the priority of the community in discuss has shifted from education to politics and thuggery. This has greatly and adversely influenced the attitude of students towards schooling. The youth are insurgent, disrespectful and addicted to drugs.

Consistent poor results both in WAEC and JAMB examinations have resulted from these happenings. The table below shows the empirical data to attest to this fact.

A close observation of the table reveals the following that:

1. In 1999, not even one out of 516 candidates who took the examination in all the schools considered qualified for University admission. By implication therefore in that year no student of Urue Offong/Oruko origin who took the examination in the Secondary Schools, situated in the area entered into the university (granted that this was their first attempt).
2. In 2001, out of 1236 candidates who took examination only about 7% obtained the Basic University Admissions requirement.
3. While the situation got very slightly improved in 2002 when the percentage of those who met the admission requirement increased to 16% there was retrogression the following year, 2003 and worse still in 2004.
4. Based on the 5-year data obtained for all the secondary schools in Urue Offong/Oruko Local Government Area, the percentage of the total number of candidates that meet the University basic admission requirements it seen as 8% (that is, 352 out of 4355). This is deplorable.

THE WAY FORWARD

In discussing the way forward, it is imperative to look closely at the role of the parents and communities. By the term "role" we mean the position and function. Parents and communities must be properly positioned to carry out their functions if elements of advancement must be seen in our educational system.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

Parents have very crucial role in educational advancement. There are several things children inherit from their parents. Organismic factors (that is, factors that lie within the organisms, which include the organism's genotypic (gene make up and personality traits) are all derived from the parents. Genotypic factors comprise the organism's intelligence and memory; while personality

factors comprise the organism's self-concept of self-esteem, attitude and emotion.

It is worth noting that the development of these traits in the child in the home is closely related to the level of discipline the child is exposed to. There cannot be any meaningful development in an undisciplined home. The first role of the parent therefore will be to provide discipline in the home.

DISCIPLINE

BBC English dictionary defines discipline as a practice of making people obey rules and punishes them when they do not. Hence to discipline some one means to punish the person for breaking rules or behaving badly. Parents should maintain orderliness in the home. They should be able to call their children to order. This must start from the cradle.

The purpose of discipline in the home is to instill self-discipline in children. self discipline as distinct from general discipline is to discipline oneself rather than wait to react to external stimuli. Experimental studies (Bakare; 1975; and Bajah, 1980) have shown a high positive index of correlation between disciplinary levels of student and their academic performance in school. This is understanding because discipline will foster hard work which, most probably culminate in excellence.

PROVISION OF BASIC LEARNING MATERIALS

It is the responsibility of parents to provide basic materials like textbooks, exercise books and other writing materials for their children. No one should be deceived. There is nothing like free education. You can have free injection, tablets, etc but not free education. Government alone cannot fund education. Parent will need to provide for the basic needs of their children. It is through the parents the child came into the world, so parents must be responsible for their children. This entails a lot of sacrifice that is bound to be fruitful in the future.

WAR AGAINST EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

It is very unfortunate to observe that some parent aid their children to be involved in examination malpractices. Some provide money and make provisions for it. Some parents are even ready to buy certificate or pay someone to take an examination for their children. It should be known that parents who do this not only destroy their children but also themselves.

from distant places, the immediate community could also assist the school financially knowing that school benefits them most.

On the other hand, the larger community, which ultimately include clans, Local Government Area and Akwa Ibom State, has a principal role of supporting schools financially, morally and structurally. Unless the present decay in the school system is checked and proactively responded to now, the situation in 10(ten) years time may be that of total collapse.

The following practical roles are herewith suggested;

1. Regular, mostly probably yearly, contribution of villages, clans and Local Government Council to education.
2. Assigning specific school projects to specific villages or clans.
3. Resolving and taking practical steps to establish boarding facilities in our schools.
4. Declaring and fighting war against examination malpractices.
5. University student should arrange for vacation schools for students in our schools.
6. Awards of scholarship and bursary for students
7. Being interested in teachers' welfare
8. Enforcement of discipline and promotion of moral ethics in the community.
9. Encouraging the establishment of sound and standard nursery schools in different villages.

Besides, the state Government should consider and work towards the re-establishment of boarding facilities in schools. Day school system has a high index of indiscipline among students (Abenga, 2000; and Adeaina, 1981).

CONCLUSION

Academic achievement of the children, which consequently affects educational advancement of our local Government Area, is adjudged deplorable. The school facilities are in shambles and teachers' morale is low and this has adversely affected their attitude to work.

In this paper, the way forward has been suggested. The parents and the entire community must be involved in the advancement of education. The time to do that is now. A stitch in time saves nine.

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