

CASE STUDIES OF EFFORTS TOWARDS UPE
WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

NIGERIA

Developments
leading to
UPE

A scheme for UPE was announced in January 1974, prepared for by workshops and conferences and launched in September 1976. Hailed as "the dawn of a new era", UPE marked a massive effort to universalize and equalize educational opportunity. Early efforts to universalize primary schooling date from the 1950's when Western and Eastern Regional schemes were started. By 1970, the twelve states of Nigeria had a mixed bag of provision, in some parts free, elsewhere fee-paying; compulsory in some states, voluntary in others. After the civil war, educational expansion continued, culminating in the 1974 announcement of UPE. As "UPE-day" approached, the four major problems of Finance, Quality, Quantity and Control dominated preparations.

Finance

Capital and recurrent finance was to come from central (Federal) government and administration was to be in the hands of State governments. Teachers' Colleges also came under Federal control. By 1976/77, as much as 24% of the Federal recurrent budget was going to education (the 1960 figure was 16%).

Quantity

Compulsory and free education was the original aim of UPE but the main target for "UPE-day" became the provision of a classroom and a teacher for all

children reporting at the opening of schools. Compulsion became a target for 1979. Accurate figures for the general population, let alone the school-age children were unavailable. As many as 2.3 million six year olds were expected to enrol on "UPE-day". Actual enrolment was 3.9 million. Some states had over-estimated, others experienced a shortfall. Benue experienced a 189% over-enrolment whilst Sokoto suffered a 58% shortfall. Flexibility of class-size, shift systems and temporary buildings accommodated the over-age, under-age and the flood of children who might otherwise have enrolled later at age seven, eight or nine. Despite the twenty months of preparation, supplies and equipment were completely insufficient to cope with the huge enrolments.

Control

A major aim of the UPE programme was the removal of inequalities from state to state thus ensuring a more stable political future. Co-ordination of state efforts, strategic planning and provision of guidelines remained a Federal responsibility. However, each state was encouraged to feel a high level of control of its own destiny. Area Implementation Committees were set up by the states to bring the administration to the grass-roots level. As Bray remarks (see "Savannah" article in Bibliography) and as Hawes and Williams predicted in their "West Africa" magazine articles, it was precisely at this grassroots level that administration had its greatest problems, largely because of the inefficiency of the Federal authorities.

Quality

Complaints of "falling standards" had long plagued Nigerian education and did not diminish with the arrival of UPE. Special efforts have been made to ensure high quality in teacher education and curriculum development.

UPE in Nigeria has not meant radical, ideological changes. Vigorous attempts are being made to cope with large numbers of pupils. Resources have been stretched to their limits. Weaknesses are evident, particularly in administration, but improvements have been made, particularly by elimination of unscrupulous school proprietors and the upgrading of teacher education. Though there is still much to be overcome, this pioneering venture deserves respect.

SIERRA LEONE

Background to UPE

Nearly 200 years of missionary education characterize the history of schooling in Sierra Leone. Colonialists ignored the rich traditional and Islamic systems of education already in existence - their needs were for clerks, administrators and the like. A recent national review of education has led to major structural changes in order to cope with the 60% of primary teachers underqualified and the mere 35% of primary age children enrolled. Schooling has been over-academic and unrelated to the environment. Mere expansion of the system for universalization would be inadequate.

Finance

Within the limitations of its comparatively generous share of the national budget, improved primary schooling has become increasingly important, though even more grossly neglected areas such as agriculture and rural development may well become higher priorities. Despite its commitment to UPE by 1980, (Addis Ababa Conference target) Sierra Leone is unlikely to achieve this aim. A high population growth rate (3% p.a.) makes the setting of target dates increasingly unrealistic. The conventional school as a means of achieving UPE is proving too expensive.

Quality

UPE as an individual target has been abandoned in favour of a strategy of total educational development to maximize equality of access, improve quality and increase "relevance" to the developmental needs of the country. Attempts to shift financial and administrative burdens to local communities have failed as local administration proved inadequate.

Attempts to shift resources from secondary and tertiary levels to the primary sector have had a negative effect on quality higher up the system (cf. Phillips' recommendations on pages 49-59). A strategy which has proved more useful has been delaying entry age and shortening the cycle. Schooling on alternate days has also been considered but qualitative arguments arose again. Further strategies concern better use of complementary non-formal provision.

Role of the
Community
Education
Centre

The major development in Sierra Leone's progress towards UPE has been the Community Education Centre as an educational base encompassing more than the conventional school, reaching into the wider community and creating realistic links between learning and life. A cautious and comprehensive approach is now in motion to ensure that progress towards UPE is more integrative and community-centred.

BANGLADESH

Background
to UPE

First steps towards universalization were taken as far back as 1930, further modifications occurring in 1951. In 1959 an Education Commission recommended the introduction of UPE by 1970. In the third Five-Year Plan (1965/70), 1980 was adopted as a more realistic target date. In 1971 Bangladesh became an independent state. By 1974, just over three-quarters

of the estimated 10.7 million primary age pupils were enrolled, one third of the total being girls. Since July 1973 primary schools have been nationalized and their teachers have become government servants. Tuition is free but attendance is voluntary. About 96% of schools are in rural areas. Class 1 enrolments in 1975 were 2.85 million whilst Class 5 enrolments were 0.62 million, illustrative of the drop-out problem. Around 29% of primary age children never attend school. A number of major problems face universalization.

Insufficient accommodation Double shifts operate; only about half the schools have adequate furniture; one chalkboard per school is the average provision and only half the schools have store-cupboards. Only 22% have latrines and only 43% of schools have a staff room.

Teacher supply and qualifications Since 1975 the figure of 45% of primary teachers untrained has fallen to about 10% though 95% of all primary teachers are men. The attraction of regular pay and better conditions in government primary schools has led to significant recruitment of teachers from the private sector.

Drop-out rates Drop-out rates are high, especially amongst girls. Parents who cannot afford the necessary books, clothing and equipment do not encourage their children to attend. Many children drop-out because they are needed for domestic and wage-earning duties.

Transport and Communication difficulties Poor roads and seasonal flooding keep pupils out of school for long periods. Inspection of schools and distribution of equipment are similarly hampered. The "Bangladesh Times" of 19 January 1978 announced a new target date for UPE as 1985. The plan is not for a mere linear expansion but for consolidation of

facilities and the introduction of a double shift everywhere. It is, however, still unlikely that the target date will be met.

INDIA

The changing
concept of
UPE

Universal elementary education in Maharashtra would involve massive enrolments at the upper end of the schools since the 11-14 year age group has been the most neglected. Enrolment and retention of the 6-11 year age group are difficult because the main areas for improvement are backward and remote rural areas. Existing enrolments suffer from over-reporting, more girls than boys stay out of school, the weaker sections of society (scheduled tribes and castes) remain under-represented and the holding power of school is low.

In general, India is shifting her emphasis from Universal Primary Education to Universal Elementary Education - 6 years to 14 years of age with two sub-stages - primary schooling running from years 1 to 4 and years 5 to 7 forming the second stage, though a 10 + 2 + 3 pattern is now appearing.

Some
objectives of
the planned
UPE programme

Plans have been made to ensure that there is a school within 1.5 km of every settlement. Major efforts are being made to restrict Class 1 enrolments to 6 year olds, encourage the enrolment of girls and scheduled castes and to develop part-time non-formal facilities. Qualitative improvements in the curriculum, in resource materials and methods of teaching are also being developed. Well planned improvement of administrative structures is also under way in Maharashtra, an important element being the devolution of much responsibility to

the block (local district) level. These and other developments contribute to Maharashtra State's rapid development of elementary schooling.

MALAYSIA

The need for a reappraisal of UPE

Universal provision, universal enrolment and universal retention are the aims of Malaysia's UPE. The commencement date of the planned implementation of UPE policies was 1962. Despite "statistical" success in the organizational aspects of universal provision, wastage, exacerbation of the rural-urban drift, school leaver problems and inappropriate curricula demand a reconsideration of Malaysia's provision.

As early as 1958 it was announced that every 6 year old could find a place in school but schooling did not become free until 1962 when fees were abolished in fully-assisted schools. School attendance is still not compulsory in Malaysia. Enrolment rates in Primary 1 remain well over 90% and new building has generally kept pace with the needs. Automatic promotion and the introduction of comprehensive rather than selective secondary education have led to good retention rates but wastage appears in the shape of unemployable 13 year old school leavers.

Teacher supply has been tackled by a three-fold pre-service approach of two year courses for those with a full secondary course, a three year programme for those with at least three years of secondary schooling and a three-year "sandwich" course for others with three years of secondary schooling.

Problems
with
Malaysia's
UPE

Problems with Malaysia's universal
provision of primary schooling include:

(a) Lack of clear aims

No revision of the curriculum in terms of basic learning needs has occurred to match the generalized objectives of UPE as aiming to meet the needs of the people and the country's development. Such matters as functional literacy and numeracy, the place of the community in schooling and the balance between individual development and group values have not been spelled out.

(b) Problems of the curriculum and socio-economic implications

Pre-occupation with quantitative expansion has led to neglect of qualitative changes. Despite 70% of the population being in rural areas the curriculum still reflects urban, academic and non-agricultural values. The rural-urban drift is not discouraged and children are disoriented from their home environment.

(c) Wastage, attrition and relapse into illiteracy

Main wastage and attrition points occur at transfer from primary to secondary. As would be expected, wastage affects costs, the unemployment picture and presents a possible social and political threat through the disappointment of school leavers.

(d) Teacher quality

Raising the entry qualifications of training colleges, altering the nature of college courses to allow

more mobility of teachers between primary and secondary schools and renewed emphasis on in-service work represent efforts to maintain high teacher quality.

Conclusion

Despite rapid quantitative improvements, Malaysia's universal provision has perhaps contributed to its own problems through lack of aims and the school-leaver problem. The whole concept of primary education needs re-examining in the light of Innotech's "Life Skills Objectives in Primary Education". Decentralization of curriculum control would lead to more meaningful content of schooling for rural dwellers. The concept of life-long education remains neglected.

JAMAICA

Background to UPE

Education in Jamaica was originally dualistic with church and state operating together. The major religious bodies still maintain a contribution, though the government finances all public education. About 45,000 pupils are catered for by a private sector which may eventually become grant-aided.

New Developments

The New Deal in Education (1966) and the Education Thrusts of the 1970's have revolutionized Jamaican education. Education is now free at all levels yet only 57% of primary school pupils go on to secondary - a reflection of sociological factors. Secondary education has become a national priority as middle and higher level personnel are trained from this sector.

The 1978/83 Education Plan established certain priorities in terms of education's role as an instrument of development.

The problem
of quality

Quality at the primary level is a major constraint. Pupil and teacher wastage, inadequate resources, space and equipment are contributing factors to low quality. Lack of research, administrative weaknesses, weak evaluation procedures and inadequate curricula have also been identified as problem areas. Highest priority has therefore been given to qualitative improvements, particularly as figures show that 53% of primary school leavers do not reach the Grade 6 level of literacy. UPE has long been established (96% enrolled in 1977) but compulsion is only to be introduced on an experimental basis for the time being. Strategies for tackling the quality problem include improvements in teacher education, the curriculum, administration, evaluation procedures, research and supervision. More library facilities, guidance and counselling and reduction of the 35-1 pupil-teacher ratio are also envisaged. The use of mass-media in Jamaica has long been an effective feature.

The way
ahead

Non-formal education is also well established in Jamaica. Expansion is based on a Government of Jamaica/USAID project which will establish 18 centres aimed at providing "life long education" opportunities.

Development of research facilities and improving inspection and supervision of schools, new school feeding, text-book and uniform programmes are further strategies of the 1978/83 plan. Qualitative improvement for national development needs is the keynote of Jamaica's provision.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Background
to UPE

Prior to 1946, education in Papua New Guinea was restricted to elementary

schools run by Missions for some 90,000 pupils. In 1955, UPE became one of the major targets of newly formulated educational objectives. The UN mission of 1962 urged a change of emphasis to build up secondary education thus speeding localization of middle and higher level posts. UPE, originally planned for completion by 1973, became diluted to an overall target of 50% enrolment. By 1970, Grade 1 enrolments reached 76%. In the same year a National Teaching Service was established, ironing out anomalies between voluntary agency and government schools.

The Education Plan

After the rejection of a University Research Unit plan for educational development as too radical and a government committee plan as too expensive, A Five Year Plan (1975/80) was adopted. It provided for six years of primary schooling from age 7, followed by four years of secondary; instruction in English from the first day of primary; increased enrolments in community (first level) schools to 82% by 1980, reducing inequalities between provinces; increasing parental contributions in cash and kind; increasing representation of girls at all levels; rapid localization of teaching and administrative personnel. Throughout the plan, expansion, "relevance" and quality were emphasised. Integration of local community into school and school into local and national community in "creative participation" has been a key concept.

Problems with implementing UPE

Inequalities from district to district have long been a problem. Despite the new Organic Law (1977) offering financial support to backward areas anomalies remain. Equalization is unlikely to occur within the target date. Equal opportunities for girls seem similarly remote. Economic constraints

and the pull of rural development programmes may also keep enrolments down. A 19% increase in the primary-age population is expected by 1980, further affecting target achievement. Retention of teachers and unrealistic cost projections make true universalization very distant. Secondary provision is the main priority. Equality of access and rural development are seen as more important than UPE.