



## Social Demand Approach: A Vital Tool in the Achievement of Cost Effectiveness in Nigeria's Basic Education

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines some issues in the use of the social demand approach (SDA) in educational planning and development with a view of facilitating cost effectiveness in the provision of universal basic education. The paper adopts a descriptive approach that involves the review of statutory documents, research reports and other related literature. These various secondary sources of information show that basic education programme in Nigeria is negatively skewed in terms of addressing issues of unemployment and poverty as well as the resource wastage that results from youth restiveness. The paper concludes that achieving self-sufficiency in the production of middle and high level manpower that is relevant to the economy will be difficult if practical training in relevant vocational skills is not started at the basic school level, from primary one, in the course of developing literacy and numeracy skills. It calls for a de-emphasis of book learning with greater focus on the development of practical skills in the provision of education as a social service directed at addressing the issues of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty as well as youth restiveness. It recommends the use of educational toys, regular field trips and more funds to make the UBE programme more functional in arresting youth unemployment, poverty and restiveness.

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### Introduction

The provision of education as a social service has been treated with levity in most developing countries and especially in Africa (Nigeria inclusive). This is because of the high level of illiteracy prevalent in these countries *viz-a-viz* their poor state of economic development and unstable political environment. The world declaration of education as the right of every child in 1948 and the adoption of Education for All by 2015 by the United Nations in 1990 do not seem to have achieved much in terms of the quality of education at primary and secondary school levels in Nigeria and in most countries of Africa. This is sad because both declarations are directed at achieving free universal primary educational for all, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status or location.

One of the policy statements on the adoption of the Education for All programmehinges on the provision of quality education that guarantees 'learning to know, to do, to live together in harmony and to be' (World Education Forum, 2000). The ultimate purpose of this policy is to bridge the socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural, the genders, as well as the healthy and the physically challenged, in terms of the provision of qualitative education that will guarantee positive employment, poverty reduction, economic empowerment and the sustenance of a healthy socio-political environment.

Various researchers have blamed the current conflict situation in the Niger Delta and the northern Nigeria as well as the high crime rate in some parts of south eastern Nigeria on insufficient education and high level of illiteracy (Abari,

Mohammed & Gbenu, 2009; Ekpenyong & Sibiri, 2011; Ololube, Onyekwere, Kpolovie & Agabi, 2012; Agabi, Agbor & Ololube, 2015). Other researchers have blamed the existence of these vices on unemployment (Warner 2012). Nte, (2009) attributes the persistence of poverty, high crime rate and unemployment to insufficient teacher education. Therefore, stating that African countries are rather slow in their efforts at providing free basic education that is of good quality; that bridges the gender gap; that enables the graduate to create positive employment for self/others; and that facilitates the sustenance of a healthy socio-political environment as observed by Agabi (2012), and UNESCO (2006), is to state the obvious.

Graduate unemployment, persistent poverty and recurring conflicts, all of which have been traced to insufficient education and the deliberate negation of a policy of education that is directed at 'learning to know, to do, to live together in harmony and to be' therefore constitute unnecessary diversions. In the opinion of Agabi (2006) and Abass (2010), this situation is further compounded by the near absence of recreational facilities in most Nigerian schools which create ample room for restiveness. However, these diversions can be curbed or reduced to the barest minimum level through the provision of an efficient system of education that equips the learner with a knowledge base that enables the individual to aptly fit into the socio-economic milieu of any environment in which he/she is located.

### Purpose

The paper intends to show the benefits that will accrue

from the application of the social demand approach in combination with the manpower requirement approach in the planning and provision of qualitative primary and secondary education as a social service. The ultimate aim is to facilitate the achievement of cost effectiveness in providing education as a social service in the effort at addressing illiteracy and manpower related issues like graduate unemployment and the associating problems of poverty and restiveness in Nigeria. Issues and events are presented and discussed based on the analysis of policy documents, research reports and other related literature. The issues discussed in this paper are drawn basically from secondary sources. The reliability of the materials used in the development of this paper therefore rests on the power of the descriptive analysis to correspond with existing realities with regards to the achievement of cost effectiveness in the provision of basic education as a social service.

### **The Social Demand Approach to Educational Development, SDA**

The social demand approach (SDA) to educational development is an approach that is very popular with most developing countries. It is most commonly used in Africa and Asia in the provision of primary education, probably because of the large number of illiterate persons in these continents and especially because of the United Nations' declaration of education as a fundamental right of every child; and the United Nations' target of Education for All by 2015 as set by the world education forum in 1990. Okeke (2006:82) aptly describes the social demand approach to educational planning and delivery as that:

*Traditional method which takes educational needs in terms of the current demand for education at the different levels and projections than on the basis of population increase, age distribution, long term national and social goals, and on the basis of what is known about state and consumer preferences for education.*

The social demand approach requires that education be provided to the people as a social service. For the purpose of this discourse, a social service refers to any service to which the recipient has free and unrestricted access. The education sector is a service sector because its primary purpose is not the production of goods but the provision of relevant training for the human resources that will constitute a viable labour force for itself and for other sectors of the economy. Education is therefore a social service when it is provided free of charge and members of the target population have unrestricted access. In which case all issues that bar effective participation in the education programme are clearly, consciously and legally removed.

The Social Demand Approach to educational planning and development requires that education should be given to the people not as a privilege but as a basic fundamental right. It is usually directed at the achievement of universal literacy through the provision of free and often compulsory primary education programmes. The major criticisms against the SDA include:

- a. It lends itself easily to political manipulation to suit the whims of the government in power.
- b. It is very expensive to run, judging by the high level of illiteracy prevalent in Africa and most third world countries. The Nigerian government acknowledged this when she returned some public schools to their original private proprietors and invited private individuals and groups to

participate in the provision of education in the country (FRN, 2004).

c. It is difficult to predict the demand for education because demand for education is controlled by a number of factors such as changes in the opportunity cost of education, changes in parental income; and demographic trends that affect school enrolment (Okeke, 2006; Abedi, 2011). Other factors that affect the demand for education are identified by Agabi, (2012) to include proximity between home and school, natural disasters, as well as socio-political upheavals.

d. It is not cost efficient in the sense that the products of primary schools are not particularly trained for any kind of work. Most developing countries that are compelled to comply with the United Nations' policy of education as basic right of every child are also contending with not only issues of high level adult illiteracy and poverty but also have to grapple with issues of national security occasioned by incessant conflicts and the resultant growth in the number of internally displaced persons who need to be catered for as refugees. These pose major challenges to the application of the social demand approach to the provision of education.

The government of Nigeria has shown by the persistence of high level illiteracy and a high percentage of youth unemployment, and weakness in the provision of free basic education that it cannot empower the youth economically and also strengthen the national economy in the long run. In the opinion of Okai&Jegede (2011), however good an education plan or programme may be, such plan or programme remains a good intention if it cannot be successfully implemented. This observation is appropriate in consideration of the state of public schools, especially at the primary and secondary education levels. Computer lessons in Nigerian public primary and secondary schools and in most private schools are still book based because of the non-existence of computers for practical lessons in most of these schools (Agabi et al, 2015).

Even where these computers exist, they are rarely used for instructional activities because of irregularity in the supply of electricity to power the computers. The situation is the same for other technology based subjects. The free education programme in Nigeria is still heavily skewed towards 'learning to know', in relation to 'learning to do' and 'learning to be.' It is important that children who are given opportunity to acquire basic education as a social service are also given such education that enables them function effectively as social and economic beings that can live in harmony with others.

### **Options to the Social Demand Approach Manpower Requirement Approach, MRA**

The first alternative approach to the SDA is the manpower requirement approach. This is a more economic approach to the provision of education. As aptly put by Okeke (2006:84), the MRA "is concerned with the analysis and projection of labour market needs for the various levels and categories of manpower. It uses manpower projections as a major consideration of planning." The MRA requires that the education system should be planned in such a way that it produces only the type of manpower that is required in the economy. It is directed at eliminating human resource wastages that result from insufficient and inappropriate education. It is also directed at producing middle and high level manpower. To this end, the application of the MRA to education may be considered more economical in terms of its objective of producing only relevant manpower through education as opposed to the provision of mass literacy programmes.

However, the MRA gives little consideration for education at the primary and secondary levels. It may therefore not be an appropriate option on its own, in view of the need to provide basic foundational education as a right and as a social service. It is also pertinent to note that human beings are differently endowed in their potentials and any education system that does not explore these potentials to facilitate their development from the earliest stage of education cannot be considered efficient in human resource development. Moreover, the human economy is very dynamic in the sense that what constitutes relevant manpower in a particular time frame and circumstance may be totally obsolete or irrelevant in a different time frame and circumstance.

#### **Cost-Benefit Approach, CBA**

The second alternative to the SDA is the cost-benefit approach. This is an approach to educational provision that weighs the cost of education against the benefits. This approach gives primary consideration to the economic benefits of any type of education before making an investment decision. The belief here is that education is an investment option that should be directed at developing the type of skills that would yield the greatest economic benefit to both the educated and his/her employer. Going by the principles of the cost-benefit approach, it is wasteful and uneconomical to invest in or to acquire any type of education that yields little or no benefit to the investor, since the purpose of any investment is to make profit.

However, as observed by Okeke (2006:85), the application of the CBA is made difficult by “the flimsy nature of basic cost data and calculation of future private and social benefits.... It also ignores the fact that education is not the only factor that affects earnings.” Moreover, the cost and benefit of education are dynamic in nature and therefore subject to variation with time and societal changes. The CBA gives no consideration to primary education since it has little or no economic benefit and primary school products are not directly prepared for the labour market.

The application of the CBA will clearly widen the gap between the rich and the poor because education has been acknowledged as an expensive venture. The cost of which is responsible for the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria and in most developing countries (World Education Forum, 2000; Gbosi, 2003; FRN 2004b). This is further compounded by the high level of poverty in the country. The Nigerian government acknowledges that poverty reduction is the most difficult challenge facing the country. According to FRN (2004b), poverty reduction is the greatest obstacle to the pursuit of socio-economic growth. The poverty rate in Nigeria increased from 27% in 1980 to 66% in 1996 and by 1999, 70% of Nigerians lived in poverty.

This statistics clearly shows that the adoption of the cost-benefit approach in education will deny a great percentage of the Nigerian school-age population the right to basic education which is the foundation to higher levels of education and socio-economic empowerment. The cost-benefit approach is clearly opposed to free education and therefore negates the guiding principle behind the right to education which states that “every child (male or female) is entitled to receive free and compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education based on individual ability” (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, p. 12).

#### **Achieving cost effectiveness through the SDA**

Cost effectiveness in education is a concept that has proven difficult to pin to a particular definition. This is because of the peculiar nature of education which lends itself to an immeasurable quantum of benefits and related costs. To this end, cost effectiveness in education can be determined against a particular goal of education rather than the general goals of education.

For the purpose of this paper, cost effectiveness is defined in relation to the goal of achieving a public basic education system that enables the products of such a system to constitute prospective desirable labour force that will be cheaper to convert to human capital and entrepreneurs. This position is in opposition to the system of education that is concerned with the provision of general knowledge directed at achieving basic literacy and numeracy.

Cost effectiveness in education can be defined as the ability of any investment in education to achieve its education goal as well as the benefits for which it was made (Agabi, 2012). It is the achievement of desired results in the most economical way and is measured in terms of investment objectives (Black, 2003). Judging from the high level of illiteracy, unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria as observed by the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, NISER, (2005), one can say that the huge investment of national fund on mass literacy programmes, like the universal primary education which began in 1976 and the universal basic education programme which began in 2000, has not been effective in eliminating illiteracy in Nigeria. This is affirmed by the Minister for Education RukayattuRufai in stating in a recent television programme that there are 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria (AIT, 2013).

However, Nigeria is not alone in the failure to achieve the goals of mass literacy programmes. Makewa et al (2012) highlight the failure of Kenya to achieve numeracy skills at the basic education level. This they did by citing the article of Ngirachu (2010) which reported a study conducted by a team of researchers from Kenyatta University and a Non-governmental organisation called Uwezo. The study involved the interview of 40, 386 pupils, and covered 70 districts. The result showed that one out of 10 standard eight pupils could not solve a class two mathematical problem; 30% of class five failed the same sum, and 20% of class two was able to solve it. Ngirachu’s conclusion from this result is that children are going to school without acquiring knowledge. Although, the report did not show the distribution of the respondents (in terms of location, public/private proprietorship, gender, etc) that constituted the sample size to warrant the generalisation that children are going to school without acquiring knowledge, the message is that the quality of classroom instruction is lower than expected.

The case of Ghana is not different, although it is presented from the perspective of youth unemployment and the resulting threat to human security. Warner (2012), presents the case of the dumping of electronic wastes in Ghana and the gradual destruction of healthy Ghanaian youths who regularly expose themselves to very harmful toxic wastes by scavenging for electronic wastes in the midst of burning metals and other dangerous e-wastes which when inhaled could damage respiratory organs and kidneys. In Warner’s opinion, e-waste is not only a threat to the human environment but also a threat to life and the most vulnerable group in this regard is the unemployed youths who scavenge at such dump sites as a means of livelihood. This is another indication that basic

education in Ghana is not as effective as expected in terms of curbing unemployment and checking poverty.

The importance of achieving cost effectiveness in public education programmes, especially at the primary and secondary levels of education cannot be over emphasized. Incomplete and ineffective education, especially at the foundational level is in itself a threat to human life. It is also a waste of vital national resources with regards to achieving the goal of 'learning to know, to do, to live together in harmony and to be' which constitutes the central theme of the United Nation's free education programme. It is also the reason for the modification of the content of Nigeria's formal education programme to accommodate vocational subjects and the expansion of the target population for free and compulsory education to include the children of nomads and migrant fishermen as well as the almajiri beggars.

The importance of cost effectiveness in education is further highlighted from the perspective of 'learning to know, to do, to live together in harmony and to be' since the focus of this work is the production of relevant manpower through the social demand approach.

#### **Education for the Purpose of Learning "To Know" and "To Do"**

In learning to know, the emphasis of education is on general knowledge. This type of knowledge is often called theoretical or book based knowledge. This was the type of education that was given by the colonial masters and it was aimed at producing clerks, messengers, drivers and evangelists. It gave little attention to teaching the technicalities of practical skills in core professions like medicine, engineering, law and teaching.

The incomplete nature of this type of education resulted in the high level of school system graduate unemployment which the Nigerian government sought to tackle by adopting the 6-3-3-4 system of education that later branched into the universal basic education programme which focused on learning 'to know' and 'to do.' This new system sought to incorporate practical activities into regular school system curriculum. It led to the introduction of subjects on vocational studies, cultural and creative arts, basic science and technology, computer studies, agricultural science and home economics into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. To achieve the goals of the 6-3-3-4 system, much public fund was spent on the importation of hi-tech instructional resources and on the training of teachers to teach the new subjects. Computer technology and other forms of science/technical education in various fields were also built into the tertiary education curriculum to ensure a steady supply of teachers in the desired areas of manpower development.

In spite of these efforts, unemployment of school system graduates persists in Nigeria. Nte (2009) attributes this situation to the poor quality of teachers being produced by tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In his observation most students of education are those with deficiencies in other disciplines and who made lower grades in university matriculation examinations and Post-UME. Nte maintains that the objectives of teacher training in Nigeria will be achieved if the admission procedure for Faculty of Education is made as rigid as the procedure for Medicine, Engineering or Law. This position is supported by Mosothwane&Ndwapi (2012) who observed a deficiency in the content of teacher education in Botswana. This duo showed in their study that in spite of the introduction of environmental education into the curriculum of

primary and secondary education by Botswana's 1994 revised National Policy on Education, colleges of education have not yet introduced environmental education into their teacher training programmes and that the supply of teachers at these two levels were therefore incompetent in the teaching of environmental literacy. This is a very serious issue because environmental literacy is one of the new concepts in contemporary universal basic education.

Aptly observed by Eleri (2008), the universal basic education programme is a universal concept directed at ensuring the right of every child to education. Its emphasis is on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, essential life skills as well as learning to learn. In Eleri's opinion, the resources necessary for the full integration of special education needs group into the UBE programme is not visible in basic schools. Such resources include the Braille press, wheel chairs, permanent hearing aids, etc. He identified the special education needs group as the physically or functionally impaired, the socially, psychologically or culturally disabled and the socially and culturally rejected and stigmatized (such as ex-convicts, former leprosy patients, former child prostitutes, street children and orphans of HIV patients). In his opinion, it is also important to include more special needs education requirement in teacher education to equip the average 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher with better skills in managing the challenges of special needs persons in a learning situation.

Modifying an education policy and curriculum is not adequate in the achievement of the development of relevant manpower in the economy. General education based on theoretical knowledge will persist and so will unemployment if curricular content is not supported with relevant resources and a supply of teachers with adequate training.

#### **Education for the Purpose of 'learning to live together in harmony' and 'to be'**

The principle of 'learning to live together in harmony and to be' centers on tolerance, social coherence and the sustenance as well as protection of individual well being. This is vital in the provision of universal basic education that is free and compulsory. The wave of violent crisis, youth restiveness and crime that is ravaging most developing countries of Africa, Nigeria inclusive, is often blamed on poverty, illiteracy and socio-cultural intolerance. The result is a general heightening of insecurity in the society.

Olulobe et al, (2012) in citing the works of Annan (2000), defined human security as transcending violent conflict and including human rights, good governance, access to education and health care as well as the existence of opportunities and choices that enable every an individual to fulfill his or her potentials. This is in line with the observation of Ajagun (2008) that education has increasingly become one of the greatest forces that could be used to achieve equal social, economic and political opportunity for every Nigerian. She goes further to say that there was a time that primary education was regarded as an instrument of national unity, growth and development as well as the foundation on which to build the future of Nigeria.

However, the Nigerian government has shown in various ways that primary education remains the foundation for the sustenance of national unity and socio-economic growth and development. The free and compulsory UBE programme that started in 2000 testifies to this. The recent inclusion of the almajiri street children and the emphasis on the participation of the children of nomads and migrant families on the free and compulsory UBE programme further affirms the importance

of basic education as an important tool in national unity and economic development. In the guideline on the establishment of private schools, the Rivers State government of Nigeria declares that primary education is basic and that the experiences of early years of primary education moulds the child's attitudes to learning and provides basic skills and impetus for continuing progress (Rivers State Government, 2004).

One of the objectives of the 9-year UBE programme is the production of an individual who is self-reliant and who is properly equipped to create jobs for himself/herself and for others. The emphasis on the development of manpower that is relevant in the economy through the school system is also captured in section 13 of the Nigerian National Policy on Education, in which the federal government recognized the importance of technical and business education as well as the need to relate its programmes to the requirements of commerce and industry (FRN, 2004). In furtherance of the importance of quality functional education, the federal government declares that "human development will be grossly undermined and impaired without employment. Agriculture, small and medium enterprises are the areas that can and must provide opportunities" (FRN, 2004b:29).

The ideals of developing manpower with relevant skills that are desired in the various sectors of the economy is plausible but difficult to attain in an educational system that has: (a) inadequate supply of professional teachers in the core subject areas; (b) shortage of instructional facilities that will facilitate the acquisition of practical experience that will aid self-employment and peaceful cohabitation; and (c) short supply of relevant teachers at the first and most important level of education.

In the development of a total personality who is able to hold his forte in terms of self-sustenance through gainful self-employment that is not detrimental to his health or that of his employee, compulsory basic education has to give more impetus to the development of practical skills than is presently the case. Subjects like computer studies, agricultural science, cultural and creative arts, basic science and technology, should deemphasize book work and emphasize practical training.

#### **Achieving Manpower Requirement through the SDA**

The introduction of vocational and science/technology based subjects into the curriculum of basic schools is not enough effort at curbing illiteracy, and reducing unemployment and poverty. The inadequacy of the basic school system in Nigeria rests on its inability to equip the Nigerian child and young person with adequate practical skills to facilitate a continuous desire for higher education or self-employment.

The general type of education that is presently being given in basic schools is the result of inadequate preparation of teachers to teach the new subjects (Agabi, 2006b; Nte, 2009; and Abari et al, 2009). This situation is further compounded by insufficiency in the supply of science and technology based instructional resources to enhance practical activities. A situation in which basic school students are required to bring personal laptop computers to school for practical activities (as often happens in private schools) negates the principle of equity in educational opportunities. The uneven distribution of educational resources (including teachers in core subjects) between urban and rural public schools as observed by Ebong & Agabi (2005) is also a clear case of inequity in the right to quality functional basic education.

Any free education system that produces graduates who cannot be gainfully employed in the productive sector can be considered inefficient with regards to poverty alleviation, youth unemployment and restiveness. Paper certificates cannot be de-emphasized unless more practical training in skills that are relevant to economic development and empowerment is provided at the level of free and compulsory basic education. This will ensure that every graduate of the basic school is equipped with at least one functional skill that can be put to positive economic use.

Basic education which technically includes primary and secondary education is the foundation for tertiary education. Any tertiary school system that is built on weak primary and secondary education systems is not likely to produce graduates who can hold their heads high in the contemporary hi-tech computerized global village. Academic crimes like examination malpractice, plagiarism, and certificate falsification often thrive in an education system that is weak. The strength of any education system rests strongly on the strength of the primary education system which is the basic foundation for both the secondary and the tertiary levels of education.

The cost of producing middle and high level manpower that is relevant to the economic needs of Nigeria will be greatly reduced if practical training in vital skills are introduced and started at the basic school level, with adequate resource support. When this is done, the resource wastage that occurs from examination malpractice, cancellation of national examinations due to massive examination fraud; student restiveness and the production of unemployable graduates by tertiary institutions will be averted or reduced to the barest minimum. The social cost of restiveness from unemployment which includes the cost of replacing damaged public facilities, loss of opportunity for providing more facilities, and the destruction of vital manpower through injury or death will also be brought to the barest minimum.

#### **Conclusion**

Nigeria cannot achieve self-sufficiency in the production and supply of adequate number of middle and high level manpower with skills that are relevant to national economic requirement if practical training in relevant skills is not introduced in public primary schools with adequate resource support. The present state of youth restiveness in the country that has been attributed to high level of unemployment, poverty and insufficient education is the result of an education system that lays more emphasis on paper work than on the acquisition of functional ability in relevant skills that are vital to national development. The problem of unemployment and all the associated ills will be solved in the long run if book-based teaching is de-emphasized and practical training in the development of skills that encourage self-employment are introduced at the primary school level.

This will greatly reduce the social cost of youth unemployment and facilitate the production of middle and high level manpower in the long run. The development of a self-sustaining economic system should begin at the basic level of education, with continuous teacher training programme in the right direction. Public schools are emphasized here because as observed by Agabi (2013), a great and significant percentage of the total school-going population in Nigeria are located in public schools because the private cost of education is relatively lower in public schools than in private schools.

### Recommendations

Based on the importance of the basic education programme in the assurance of equity in educational participation as well as in the need to develop relevant middle and high level manpower in all fields to run the national economy, this paper recommends a reduction in the cost of tertiary education by giving more emphasis to skill training at the universal basic education level with greater attention on public schools in the following ways:

- (a) Introduce practical training in fields that are relevant to the national economy from primary one using educational toys that project such fields, in addition to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills with plastic building blocks and other relevant instruction-by-play method facilities.
- (b) Engage the services of professionals on part-time teaching of vocational subjects in which either the supply of teachers is not adequate or teachers are not adequately trained, until there is improvement in the supply of adequately trained teachers in subjects that facilitate human resource development such as entrepreneurship, fine and applied arts; animal science, home science etc.
- (c) More Emphasis should be placed on practical exposure of children to computer studies, agricultural practices, introductory technology and cultural arts, as early as primary one with the introduction of easy-to-use manual devices in the plastic mode. The situation in which basic schools are built without provision for practice in agricultural studies and basic technology workshops should be discouraged.
- (d) Learners should be gradually exposed to the realities of relevant professions in the national economy. This should be done through field trips starting from primary schools. Every basic school should make provision for one or two trips per session for every class, in the teaching of science and vocational subjects.
- (e) The allocation of funds to education should be upwardly reviewed. A good education plan is only a document if its implementation is not effected through adequate funding. In de-emphasizing theoretical teaching and emphasizing practical training, more fund will be required than is presently given to education in the national budget. This will enable the various statutory organs of education to provide vital resources for practical training in desirable skills and also monitor the use of such resources.

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