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DEEPEN seeks increase in media coverage of education

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TO facilitate a more enabling environment and a more effective market that would provide increased quality of education for private schools, Developing Effective Private Education Nigeria (DEEPEN), a programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), has identified the need for improved media coverage of education programmes.

This became imperative following a discovery that the private sector engages large chunk of pupils in Lagos Private Schools. In September 2013, DEEPEN embarked on a five-year programme on how the media market can help children, parents, teachers, policy makers, school owners and managers in getting quality information to make informed decision.

The innovative programme initiated by DFID was designed to use a market-development approach to improve learning outcomes in Lagos private schools, through making markets work for the poor methodology.

Speaking at a media forum tagged, "A Commercially Viable Approach to Increasing Education Coverage in the Media", Team Leader of DEEPEN, Mr. Gboyega Ilusanya, stated that recent analysis revealed that private schools are major players on the Lagos education scene, dominating at the pre-school and primary levels and serving children from all levels of household income.

He reminded that most of these private schools, for several reasons, are not licensed to operate, yet they are found in the system delivering educational services to pupils and their parents.

Thus the need for creating useful information and quality education programmes that would serve as a guide for all stakeholders.

He said: "With estimated five million Lagos parents with children in over 15,000 private schools and 2,000 public schools, the state has one of the largest private education markets in the world and

credible effort to improve human capital clearly needs to include the private sector which is now the main provider of education, even for children from low-income households.”

“The five-year project which will be concluded by 2018, is anticipating a vibrant and dynamic market for private education especially in low-cost schools across Lagos. It is also expected that the sector would be characterised by learning innovations and quality improvements for children at all levels of household income, as well as to have a private school that responds to parental demands and adapt to meet their expectations for better education.”

To achieve these, Gboyega informed that the role of the media is very crucial, thus the need for increase in media education coverage to help parents make informed decision and spur school managers to best practices.

His words, “DEEPEN has conducted detailed market analysis to identify the main constraints and challenges for improved private education in Lagos, and as part of the five-year activities we are to work with the media, getting them to sit and discuss how education coverage in the media can be improved in a commercially viable way and what would be the necessary support.”

“A recent assessment of current practices around the media coverage of education in Lagos showed a widespread of lack of dedicated education programmes on radio and Television but an appreciable and regular coverage of education by the print media.

“The assessment showed that the majority of broadcast media practitioners consider education programmes as mainly for children as part of their community service and corporate social responsibility; and as unpopular and commercially unattractive.

However, Deputy Team Leader, Stephen Bayley, during the media workshop, remarked that the current low coverage of education by the media, especially the broadcast media, can be reversed not only to make relevant information available to education stakeholders but to generate revenue for media houses and supporting organisations.

There are millions of education stakeholders who are potential audience for issue based, quality education content. Parents need information that will aid their decision-making processes around their children’s education, they will welcome a platform to regularly discuss and debate education issues. The media can help parents meet these needs and generate substantial revenue from advertisers and sponsors targeting this massive market.

“Our findings revealed that at least there are 26 radio, 12 television and 20 print media currently operating regularly in Lagos; more than 50 per cent of broadcast media have no dedicated, issue-based education programme, while appreciable, regular education coverage by print media

On his part, the Intervention Leader, Tolase Olatinwo charged participants to refocus on their target audience for education contents and programmes and engage in education programmes that could

stimulate audience views, appeal to parents, as well as attract sponsors and advertisers, so as to build quality education system in Lagos state.

He said parents, children, schools and policy makers need information to add value to their work since relevant information helps in decision-making.

The forum was attended by education correspondents in the print and broadcast industry in Lagos State, who unanimously stated that entertainment has lessened the importance of education, as most sponsors and advertisers have interest in sponsoring entertainment programmes rather than educational programmes.

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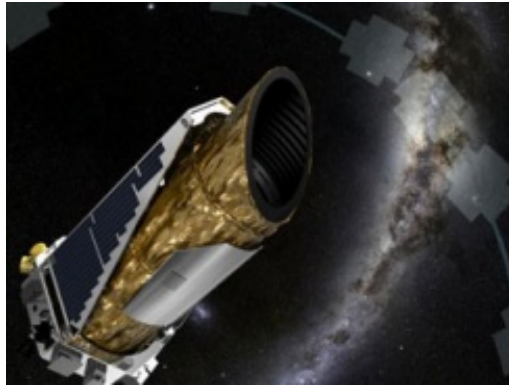
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