

VOLUME 8 NO 1 APRIL 2012

ISSN 0794-2192

African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education

*A journal of the History of Education Society of Nigeria
An Affiliate of the International Standing Conference for
the History of Education (ISCHE).*

Secretariat:

Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION POLICY IN NIGERIA

Etejere, P.A.O; Ojo, Olubukola James and Lawal, Abdulmumin .A

Abstract

This paper examines the strategies for successful implementation of Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria. The paper examines the concepts of UBE and past educational policies in Nigeria. It further looked at the objectives of UBE policy, scope and coverage area of UBE. To ensure successful implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education Act was established by the National Assembly. An attempt was made at identifying current problems of the UBE policy in Nigeria which include: poor funding; poor motivation of teachers; improper supervision and monitoring of the UBE programme; inadequate teaching and learning facilities. Possible working solutions were also provided which were aimed at overcoming the problems of the UBE programme in Nigeria. The paper ends by making some notable recommendations that could facilitate successful implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria.

Introduction

The determination of the government under the admirable leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to achieve EFA by 2015, introduced the UBE programme. It was launched at Sokoto on the 30th day of September 1999, but actually took off in the 2000/2001 school year. The launch became necessary as the Obasanjo led government came into power in 1999 and met an educational system that was in a state of decay (FGN 2004). Teachers were poorly trained and motivated, high rate of illiteracy as a consequence of high drop out rates, poor infrastructure conditions of schools. Thus, the introduction of the UBE came as a result to positively transform the nation's basic education sub-sector (FGN 2004) and to meet the context of the global vision of EFA. Today, the UBE is here with us as it aims at equipping individuals with knowledge (Obinaju 2001).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme aims at making education compulsory at the primary and junior secondary (classes 1–3) school levels. This

is one of the cardinal programmes of the government, aimed at demonstrating its strong commitment to international policies geared towards the eradication of illiteracy in Africa. Through the UBE programme, the Nigerian government demonstrates a strong commitment to the Jomtien Declaration (1990) on the promotion of basic education for all to drastically reduce illiteracy within the shortest possible time frame. The specific objectives of the UBE programme as outlined in the implementation guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education (Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education, 2000), are as follows:

1. developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
2. the provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age
3. reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system through improved relevance, equality and efficiency
4. catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education
5. ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, education, and ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

A Universal Basic Education Commission was established by an Act of the National Assembly as a way of ensuring the proper implementation of the objectives of the UBE programme. It is the responsibility of this Commission to coordinate the activities of the programme throughout its first nine-year 'gestation period', from 2001 to 2009 and beyond (Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). The UBE guidelines also aim to correct the gender disparity in education by ensuring that all children of school age, including girls, are compelled to enrol in school. The UBE programme is intended to be universal, free and compulsory, thereby emphasizing that parents have an obligation to send their children to school.

Concepts Of Universal Basic Education

Universal Basic Education is the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. It has three main components - universal, basic and education. Universal connotes a programme that is meant for all members of the society - the rich and poor, the physically fit and physically challenged, the brilliant and dull, the regular students and the dropouts including every other individual that is ready to acquire knowledge. The term basic connotes that which is fundamental or essential indicating that basic education is the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge and that it is for all citizens. It is

that type of education that can help an individual function effectively in the society (Adewole, 2000). Enoch and Okpede (2000) described it as the form of education, which is essential for life. They also saw UBE as the form of education, which must equip an individual with the necessary skills to survive in his environment. It should be a practical and functional education.

UBE Vision Statement

“At the end of 9 years of continuous education, every child through the system should have acquired appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, communication, manipulative and life skills and be employable, useful to himself and the society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic skills”.

UBE Mission Statement

To serve as a prime energizer of a rational movement for the actualization of the nation's UBE vision working in contact with all stakeholders, thus mobilizing the nation's creative energies to ensure that, EFA becomes the responsibility of all.

UBE Versus Past Educational Policies

Before the introduction of the UBE by the Obasanjo led government in 2000, several educational policies geared towards providing accessible and affordable education for all citizens of Nigeria of educable age existed. The UBE is the fourth in the ladder of educational policies in the country. The origin of Nigeria's educational policies dates back to the 1955 comprehensive education laws of the western Nigeria, 1957 Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the Eastern region and the 1976 UPE programme then, the baby programme in 2000 which is still being nurtured to maturity.

Each of the policy existed and was established by different government administration and was criticized when a new government rides into power as Utibe (2001) asserted, “The UPE contributed to a lowering of the standard of education in Nigeria at the primary school level”. The UPE of 1976 was faulted in scope, planning, financing and a general lack of accurate data of children that would be affected by the scheme as absence of accurate census data in the country at that time prompted the failure. The UPE was primarily designed to reduce the educational imbalance between the North and South backed by the oil boom. The government embarked on the full responsibility of training teachers for the scheme. 163,000 teachers got from the emergency training programme which made various school leavers to obtain the TC II certificate and thus, raising the quality of staff strength in the primary school sub-sector throughout the federation.

The incessant political changes in the past constituted the problems of ineffective implementation of the policy statement of EFA. In decades past, military intervention occasioned by changes in government in quick succession, variations in the non-uniformity in the system of primary education, instability, which characterized the Nigerian political scene, has always led to changes in educational policies most especially, at the primary school level. Each government regime rationalized the policy on education on its own accord. Utibe (2001) asserted that, 'the UPE programme in the then two region of the country was improperly planned and hurriedly executed' leading to a waste of millions of Naira. The general outcry in the falling standard of basic education and a sharp depreciation in the morals of primary school children brought about the introduction of the UBE. The UBE challenged with the problems facing basic education in Nigeria before its introduction include: Dearth of facilities, inadequate supervision, shortage of personnel, lack of funds, high prices of textbooks, incoherent implementation of the curriculum, drop-out rate (Denga 2000).

Scope of UBE Policy

UBE by definition must provide minimum education. Citizens should have easy access to it and it should be free. It is expected that stiff penalties should be imposed on persons, societies or institutions that prevent children, adolescents and youths from benefiting from UBE (Adewole, 2000, Obayan, 2002). UBE is also expected to provide basic education which is expected to be terminal. Such education (UBE) is not meant for school age children alone, it is also designed to take care of the educational needs of young people and adults who have not had the opportunity to receive adequate schooling. Thus the UBE programme will include: nomadic education, education of migrant fishermen, school drop outs, out of school children and adult education. The UBE programme is intended to be universally free and compulsory. From the above, it can be seen that the content of the programme is even much more expensive, as it covers all dimensions of the various sectors of the economy. According to Obayan (2000), its scope covers the provision of;

1. Programme/initiatives for early childhood care and socialization.
2. Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy.
3. Out of school and non-formal programmes for updating knowledge and skills.
4. Special programmes for nomads.

Problems Facing The Successful Implementation Of UBE Policy In Nigeria

1. **Poor Planning:** This is one of the major problems that is facing the successful implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria. According

to Adamaechi and Romaine (2000), proper planning has been found to be at the root of the success of every good educational policy or programme. Without proper planning, the best education programme is bound to fail. The UPE programme of the past suffered from lack of planning. Nwagwu (2000) observed that poor planning was one of the problems responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of the former UPE programmes. This problem still tends to thrive and has not been adequately being improved.

2. **Poor Funding:** This is central to the development of education in general and technical education in particular. Olaitan (1996) stated that no educational programme can be successful in the face of inadequate funding. Educational funding in Nigeria has been dwindling in recent times. The yearly average allocation to the educational sector has even declined to about 7%. According to Okoh (2002), the inability of the federal and state government to effectively sustain educational funding demonstrates lack of adequate government planning. *The Punch Newspaper* (2008) also stated that the educational budget is a far cry from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organization's (UNESCO) 26% recommendation indicating that the programme is yet to experience its full boss inspite of efforts put in by the state government.
3. **Poor Implementation:** In Nigeria, policies are formulated but implementation often becomes a long awaited issue. Previous UPE schemes as well as many other educational policies in Nigeria suffered from the problem of poor or ineffective implementation. In most cases, the policies and programmes were sound in terms of targets to be reached and means of reaching those targets; but as the implementation is being carried out, there will be a breakdown somewhere along the line. Cox (1996) stated that the main problem confronting education in less developed countries is the inability to coordinate and effectively manage available resources.
4. **Population Explosion:** Excessive population explosion in primary and secondary schools especially in government owned institutions indicating that the current policy of free education at primary and secondary schools implemented by the government in the country has led to population explosion. Okoh (2000), Salami and Uko-Aviomoh (2000) observed that an increase in class size also affects the effective implementation of vocational programmes at the primary level. However, when the student to teacher ratio is too high, successful implementation of the UBE programme can not be achieved.

Strategies For The Implementation Of Universal Basic Education Policy In Nigeria

1. **Recruitment and training of new teachers:** The successful implementation of the universal basic education in Nigeria will require recruitment of additional teachers to the existing number. To actualize the dream, Akhaine (2001) reported that the federal government has mandated the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) to produce 30,000 teachers yearly for the scheme. Caution should however be exercised as to the quality of the teachers being selected to participate in the programme. This advice is intended to avert incompetence in service delivery. Chapman (1994) opined that poorly prepared teachers find it difficult to face the challenges of classroom content, maintain classroom discipline and manage flow of class activities.
2. **Retraining of existing teachers:** The new scheme will entail retraining of existing teachers to acquaint them or create awareness at a general level and to highlight new additions to the various subject areas. On the whole, this programme of action can be attained through frequent seminars, workshops and professional contacts with other educators. This will reduce teachers' sense of isolation and build high professional morale. Lawal (2000) observed that training and development activities were planned programmes of organizational improvement undertaken to bring about a relatively permanent change in an employee's knowledge, skills, attitude or social behaviour. It is one method of improving performance and stability at the workplace.
3. **Establishment of new schools:** The establishment of new schools will go a long way in making the UBE policy successful in Nigeria. According to James (2009), the construction of more schools in the country will give the UBE scheme a facelift. For example, the Delta State Government set up a committee on school system data collection/collation recommending the establishment of additional 495 primary schools at the rate of 300 pupils per school. These projected schools, if established, will go a long way in addressing the problems of school mapping currently in existence in the state, that is to say the existing schools are not evenly distributed.
4. **Provision of infrastructure and equipment:** Sequel to the establishment of new schools, there will be a need to adequately equip the schools. The provision of infrastructural facilities like libraries, benches, laboratory equipments should be adequately provided in UBE schools if the objective of the scheme is to be achieved. In light of the aforementioned, it

imperative that something urgent should be done to redress the insufficient number these facilities.

5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** The human and material resources outlay involved in the universal basic education scheme calls for an effective monitoring and evaluation of the programme to ensure regular appraisal of the scheme. This will help to identify the progress made, areas of deficiency and what needs to be done. Ojedeke (1998) had noted that the implementation had been a serious handicap to most genuine efforts aimed at developing the educational system in Nigeria. He therefore upheld that: "If the Nigerian educational system is to develop and compare favourably with the advanced countries of the world, there is a need to monitor and evaluate each stage of the implementation process so as to ensure that projects are being implemented".
6. **Increased enrolment strategies:** The projected figure for the universal basic education scheme in the country is moderately high and therefore calls for sustainable strategy in ensuring a successful enrolment in the scheme. The entire exercise should not be abandoned at the well-wish level but some defined strategies as a viable publicity committee made up of churches, parent-teachers association, community development associations, village counsels and so on should be put in place to assist in creating an awareness about the programme and its attendant benefit.

Conclusion

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a reformed programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria aimed at reinforcing the implementation of the national policy on education. The UBE programme is an expression of the strong desire of the government of Nigeria towards ensuring that Education For All goal is achieved by the year 2015. Though there have not been records of successful free education programmes in Nigeria. Therefore, for the successful implementation of the UBE programme, all hands should be on deck strategies/recommendations put forward in this paper must be strictly followed and implemented. The Universal Basic Education commission, therefore, must device a way of combating problems affecting the implementation of the UBE policy; otherwise the hope UBE policy as an instrument for national development will remain a myth.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the paper made some recommendations;

- Attention should be paid to both the manpower and financial resources which will be needed to implement the policy.

- There must be effective communication between the target beneficiaries and the implementors of policy programmes.
- Provision should be put in place for adequate monitoring of projects, as poorly monitored projects will only yield undesired results.
- That the government should maintain the policy by making adequate budget for the funding of the UBE and a monitory supervisory team be set up to see the judicious expenditure of such funds.
- Government also should recruit more teachers into the primary and junior secondary schools in the state in order to enable the pupils to achieve permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively.

REFERENCES

- Adewole, A (2003):** Universal Basic Education: Aspects of meaning and purpose. Proceeding of the 15th Annual Congress of the Nigerian Academy of Education. University of Benin 6th-9th November, 2000 (Eds) Aghenta. J.A. and Awanbor. D. Ambik Press. pp. 104-106.
- Cox, C (1996):** "schools in the Developing Countries: Educ. Forum 1: 2.
- Denga, D.I (2000):** Evolving a New Educational Culture: The Universal Basic Education Focus. *International Journal of Research in Basic and Life Long Education*, 1(1& 2) 1-6.
- Enoch, E.O & Okpede, E.O (2000):** The meaning, history, philosophy and lesson of UBE Proceedings of the 15th Annual Congress of the Nigerian Academy of Education. University of Benin 6-9th Nov. 2000 (eds: Aghenta J. A. and Awanbor D). Ambik Press. pp. 61-64.
- Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education. (2000):** Implementation guidelines for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education. 1-17.
- Nwagwu, N.A (2002):** From UPE to UBE: Some basic planning considerations for effective implementation of programmes. In T. Ajaji J.O, Fadip P.K, Ojedele Oluchukwu E.E (eds) *Planning and Adminsitartion of UBE in Nigeria*. National Teachers Institute. Nigeria.
- Obayan, P (2000):** Education and the Nigerian Society Revised the UB as a People's Oriented Programme being the 2000 Prof. J. A. Majasan fir Anniversary Memorial Lecture Ibadan. (2)
- Obayan, P (2000):** National Press Briefing on the Universal Bas Education (UBE) Programme Lagos. (1)
- Obinaju, Q.M (2001):** Supervision and Evaluation: Strategies for t Success of the UBE Programme. *Journal of Research in Education*, 2(1): 11 129.

Okoh, E (2002): High Level Education, Manpower Development and Training. A key to sustainable Economic growth and Development. Inaugural Lecture Series 63, University of Benin.

Okoh, E. (2000): An Appraisal of Vocational and Technical Education Programmes at the Primary School Level in Nigeria. *Afri. J. Educ.* 5(2): 27-39.

Olaitan, S.O (1996): *Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria. (Issues and Analysis)*. Onitsha: Noble Graphic. Proceeding of the 15th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Academy of Education. University of Benin. 6th-9th Nov., 2000, (Eds: Aghenta J. A. and Awanbor D.) Ambik Press.

Salami, L. I. and Uko-Aviomoh, E. E. (2000): Using the UBE to bridge the gender gap in educational opportunities and participation.

The Punch (2008): 2008 in review: Unity schools' debacle exposed our unseriousness in planning. *The Punch Newspaper*, 17(19): 2

The Punch (2008): Nigeria may not realise the goal of Education for all by 2005 unless *The Punch Newspaper*, 17(19): 2

Utibe, O (2001): Issues and Problems in the Effective Implementation of the UBE in Uyo L.G.A of Akwa Ibom State, B.Ed Project (Unpublished), Uyo: University of Uyo.