

Examining Universal Basic Education System in Nigeria.

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Abstracts

Education is fundamental human rights that should be accorded to all human beings. The importance of basic education and the roles it plays in the educational system of any nation is germane to the social and economic development of such country. In this paper, the trend of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria, its aims and objectives and the set goals desired to be achieved was critically examined. Promotion of gender equality, provision of solid foundation, enhancement of educational reform, encouraging national integration and inculcation of literacy and numeracy were highlighted as the needs for UBE while lack of adequate fund, demography pressure, improper management strategy, over emphasis on tertiary education, ethical problem and non-adjusting to child familiar obligations were the factors observed as the major problems of UBE. Some suggestions were made as recommendations for an effective UBE programme in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education, Universal, Basic, Programme and Effective

Introduction:

Education is a fundamental human right that should be accorded to all human beings. Okpala (2008) sees education as a process that emphasis development, acculturation and learning how to learn. Education is also seen as a social responsibility of government to its people. (Abdullahi, 2005). Ukeje, (2000) in his own remark stated that “education is so powerful, it can lift up or impoverish”. Therefore, it is important to make education compulsory and effective for all citizen. The importance of basic education and the roles it plays in the educational system of any nation is germane to the social and economic development of such country. In most of the countries, basic education has been made compulsory and this contributed to the full involvement of citizen. This level of education has been regarded as the foundation ladder that will guide and determine the onward movement of learners to other higher level of educational system.

Universal Basic Education is the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. (Eddy and Akpan, 2009). 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. Anyabolu, (2000) emphasized that what Nigeria needs in the 21st century to turn her economy around is not extended primary and elementary education, but a basic education programme that will ensure that every Nigerian youth on graduation is sufficiently equipped with the knowledge, skills and

experience required for initial entry into one occupation in the world of work, whether college band or not.

According to Oni (2008), he stated that, the success and failure of the entire education system are determined by basic education and also as universalization of access to education. This implies that any society requires a functioning basic education system for adequate effective educational system. Education often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and opportunity for wealth creation. Generally, one of the national education goals as stated in the National Policy on education 4th edition (2004) section 1 No 7d, “the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Educational System existed in Nigeria prior the emergence of the missionaries was the induction of members of the society into the activities and exposure to culture and behavior of the society. This system of education is referring to as indigenous, traditional, pre-colonial or informal system of education. It was notice that in most cases, there were no schools and professional teachers, it was essentially practical training designed to enable the individual to play a useful role in the society.

Education is an essential key for any development with enormous social and economic benefits attached; there is no nations that can rise without an effective educational system especially at the grass root level. It is in this view that the government of Nigeria made provision for basic education in the National Policy on education in section 3 No 15 that “basic education shall be of 9 years duration comprising 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior secondary education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non-formal education programme at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out – of – school youth. Therefore, this paper explores theoretically the trend of basic education in Nigeria, the needs for basic education and problems of basic education, also some recommendations were suggested as the way forward.

The Trend of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

The history of basic education in Nigeria started in 1995 when the universal primary education scheme was inaugurated by the government of Western Nigeria. The Eastern Nigeria government launched its own universal primary education in 1957. In Northern Nigeria, education was provided free by government in a bid to make children attend school. (Adeyemi, 2007). This shows that before independence the administration of universal basic education was based on regional basis and supervised by their various governments.

The Federal government of Nigeria under General Muritala Mohammed and Gen Olusegun Obasanjo military regime launched Universal Primary Education (UPE) in October 1976 and directed that all the regional locations should collaborate with the new development. This unprecedented development enhances the growth of education at all levels especially at the primary school level. One of the notable achievements by the federal government through this regime was the decree that made primary education, programme free and compulsory for all

citizen, this gave rise to an explosive in the primary education system because there was a tremendous increase in schools as a result of non-fee access to education.

In 1990, Nigeria participated in the world conference on education held in Jomtien, Thailand which was tagged education for all (EFA). Among other issue raised at the conference was the high rate of illiteracy in mostly all the countries represented, also it was observed that many students that had the opportunity to start schooling are in one very or the other drop-out of school because of inability to pay the necessary fees attached therefore, one of the outcome of the gathering was the adoption of Education For All (EFA) in order to reduce to the barest minimum the rates of drop-out and illiteracy in every society.

By 30th September, 1999, the federal government of Nigeria launched Universal Basic Education (UBE) to replace the former Universal Primary Education (UPE). It was launched in sokoto state with Professor Pai Obanyan as the pioneer National Coordinator. The Universal Basic Education Act (2004) makes provision for basic education comprising of ECCE, primary and junior secondary education. The financing of basic education is the responsibility of states and local governments. However, the federal government has decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. The Act also provide for the establishment of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme at the states and local government through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). The Universal Basic Education Commission was formally established on October 7th, 2004.

According to Nwagwu (2002), the aims and objectives of Universal Basic Education are as follows:-

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop –out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.
3. Catering for young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling as well as other out of school children, adolescent, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
4. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as ethical moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Another, world conference on Education was held in Dakar in 1990 as a follow-up meeting to the conference in Jomtien. At this meeting a new sets of goals were set to be attained by the year 2015. The goals were as follows:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

2. Ensuring that by 2015, all children with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programme;
4. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls fill and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy numeracy and essential life skills;

The Needs for Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

1. **Promoting Gender Equality :** the report of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as of 2001 estimates around 115 million children of primary school age, the majority of them girls, do not attend school. The education of children without gender barrier is a way of reducing poverty and aids the social and economic development of the nation. It will also help to reduce the mortality rates and promote concern for the environment. Before the introduction of the universal basic education in Nigeria, some parts of the country denied their children especially girls the opportunity of attending school. UNICEF also advocates quality basic education for all, with an emphasis on gender equality and eliminating disparities of all kinds. Educated girls are likely to marry later and have fewer children and they are likely more productive and more able to participate in social, economic and political decision making.
2. **Enhancement of Educational Reform:** the system of education is not static , it requires consistent checking and re-organization as at when due in order to achieve the desired goals and to meet up with the needs of the society. Therefore, the introduction of universal basic education enables the governments at all levels to be involved in the development of education especially at the grassroots levels that is primary education.
3. **Encouraging National Integration:** Nigeria is one of such country that are united together by ethnicity and culture, neglecting the individual background and needs. The emergence of universal basic education further enhances this union because the aims and objectives is one for the nation, and everybody sees the need for education. The culture of the society are thought and emphasis are being laid on national unity.
4. **Inculcation of knowledge of Literacy and Numeracy:** since the introduction of universal basic education in Nigeria, there was a drastically reduction in the population of

people that could not read nor write, people that had no opportunity to go school now preferred that their children attend school. This was made possible since little or no fee is attached and individuals possess the ability to communicate no matter how little at any point in time.

5. **Provision of Solid Foundation:** Educational levels are in stages and whatever happens at the lower stages affects negatively or positively the remaining stages. The involvement of government at the basic education level will go a long way to solve many future problems in the attainment of desired learning outcomes.

Problems facing the development of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

As already noted, diverse factors have militated against the effective delivery of education in Nigeria. Perhaps the most significant and overriding factors are:-

1. **Lack of Adequate Fund:** Severe budgetary constraints have led to a slow pace of programme implementation and heavy dependence on donor assistance. Mobilising resources for education needs to be based on accurate knowledge and analysis of the given situation. While a major obstacle to resource mobilization is a weak capacity for proper planning and implementation.
2. **Demography Pressure:** The high population growth rate of Nigeria and her large size put a great strain on available resources because the provision of educational facilities to remote locations, especially the rural populations of the country, most of which lack access roads, has great financial implications. The issue of population control has so far not been seriously addressed.
3. **Improper Management Strategy:** The size and diversity of the country's population create the need for a decentralized approach to education administration and management. In spite of the existence of the three tiers of government, the structure of the Federation and the creation of the National Primary Education Commission at "the centre" Schools Management Boards at the State level, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) at the local government level, decentralization in its true nature has never really occurred. Federal and State Governments continue to have control over governments in terms of policy and programme initiation: yet Local governments lack adequate planning and management capacity. Some of the key political decisions involved in genuine decentralization viz capacity building, autonomy, responsibility-sharing, as well as social participation, and accountability have yet to be actualized.
4. **Over-Emphasis on Tertiary Education:** Continued emphasis on tertiary education and adult literacy, and corresponding increase in resource allocations to colleges and universities at the expense of primary education, have tended to aggravate the problems of access, and retention at the latter levels as well as the problems of adult literacy.
5. **Ethical Problem:** It has been suggested that because of suspicion by many parents of the values of Nigerian education to-day, many parents in the rural communities would rather send their children to Koranic Schools than to formal Western-style primary schools. The

former have not become part of the country's integrated education statistics, though in Northern States, many children are enrolled in Koranic and Islamiyya schools. Yet, in order to achieve the nations' goal of EFA, all available channels ought to come into play.

6. **Not Adjusting to the Child's Familial Obligations:** The hours of opening and closing schools are centrally determined and fixed. This has become a major constraint especially in rural areas of the country. Even if the values gap can be bridged by dialogue, there is still the problem of developing an education experience that will take account of or that will be sensitive to the roles children are expected to play in the household and /or the family business if schools hours conflict with these familial demands, schools will find it difficult to attract and retain pupils in school.

Recommendations for Effective Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

In view of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. There is need for adequate funding by all tiers of government. Since the future of any nation depends on the quality of its educational system, it is very important that a good percentage of the budget should be set aside for the development of education especially at the level of providing basic education for all citizens
2. Government should ensure proper utilization of the allocated budget. On many occasions, it is always realized that due to high level of corruption in Nigeria, the money assigned for Universal Basic Education among other ministries and parastatal are diverted by some people or group of people for their own selfish interest. Therefore, this study recommends that government should not only release money for this programme but ensure proper utilization and monitoring of the fund.
3. Employment of professional teachers is another factor that can boast the effort of the government on universal basic education and improve the standard of education as a whole. The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that no nation can rise above the level of its teaching staff underscores, according to Omoregie, (2006), the roles of the teacher and teacher educational programmes in national development. This study therefore, recommend that henceforth, only professional teachers who has been certified qualified should be allowed to teach in school.
4. Government should as a matter of fact and urgency implement an effective school based feeding. Although, some state government shows the indication of starting the programme but it is not well implemented because of the rate of corruption and the insincerity on the part the government. Students that are well feed will learn at a very fast rate compare to a students that are not well feed.
5. There is need for the government to encourage and create an enabling environment for external and non- governmental agencies to support universal basic education as stated at the world conference tagged Education for All (EFA)

6. Finally, this study recommends that government should introduce innovations to education. For example the introduction to the use of computer by students should start from primary school so as to assist the students to adjust to the new development and innovations as observed that most examination in schools are now computer based.

Conclusions

The UBE programme is imperative and germane to the development of any nation. There is no amount of money budgeted on this programme that can be termed too much. Therefore, the government in processing the effective outcome of the desired goals and objectives needs to put everything in place for proper implementation. The recommendation made in this study will assist the government in delivering an effective UBE programme in Nigeria.

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