

## **Public Policy Implementation and Availability of Facilities/Infrastructures in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, 2008 – 2018**

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DOI: 10.56201/jpslr.v8.no1.2022.pg21.43

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### **Abstract**

*Educational policy implementation in Nigeria have been hit in the main by incidences of poor availability of physical facilities/infrastructures. This paper examines public policy implementation and availability of facilities/infrastructures in primary and junior secondary schools in Rivers State between 2008 – 2018. The paper is guided by the single proposition that, there is no significant difference in universal basic education policy implementation and the availability of facilities/infrastructures in schools in Rivers State. The paper is anchored on the Programme Evaluation Theory as its analytical framework. A sample of 600 schools was purposively derived from a population of 1,332 of both primary and secondary schools in the state. This was evenly distributed to the 3 senatorial districts in the state. Data for the paper was generated via questionnaire distributed to the 600 principals and head teachers of the selected schools, and via secondary sources such as books, UBE policy documents, etc. Generated data was analyzed using Gross Enrolment Ratio Growth Rate, Teacher/Pupil Ratio, T-test and Diagrammatic Representation. As part of its findings, the paper revealed that, the situation of education in the state is not in consonant with the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy. Also, that the state government’s stance for free compulsory basic education is only but an elusive agenda. As such the paper recommends that; the state government should devise more inclusive strategies that will ultimately seek to enforce the free education for every child within the UBE age. This can be done by adopting the “parent-teacher team” of monitors and enforcers of this policy.*

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**Keywords:** public policy, availability, implementation, schools, UBE

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## Introduction

The importance of education in human endeavor cannot be over emphasized, as third world countries like Nigeria who prioritized education progress by leaps and bounds. The United Nations (UN) Human Rights declared “access and participation of education as a fundamental human right to all global citizens of the world” (Odukoya, 2009), thus, education has always been conceived as a veritable instrument for man to achieve his major life’s goal; which is to explore, conquer and dominate his environment, whether municipally or internationally. Dewey (1916), in his book, “Democracy and Education” called for popular or universal education, which according to him would aim at constant expansion of people’s horizon, the formation of new purposes, new responses and the development of the capacity for more growth and progress.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria is a programme designed to transmit a common cultural heritage. The training of children and adolescents in the norms, values and aspirations of the nation is a veritable instrument for national integration and development. It is expected that educational reforms or re-organization would be carried out to enable Nigeria’s education cater for the future professional needs (Ayeni, 2000). In addition to playing the noble role of cultural transmission in the modern society today, the UBE programme is designed to provide universal literacy, numeracy and enlightenment. The desire to inculcate in children the skills of literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate made the UBE programme worthwhile (Aboyi, 2004). Apart from the above, there is the need to lay a solid foundation for scientific and reflective thinking, character and moral training and the development of sound attitude, and above all, develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment (FGN, 1981).

The UBE programme, if faithfully implemented by governments, will not only be a powerful instrument for achieving poverty alleviation, but also, a secured means of ensuring proper and adequate internalization of sound democratic culture.

Before the launch of the UBE scheme, the transition rate from primary school to junior secondary school was 43.7%. By implication, 56.3% of those in the nation’s primary school today are likely to grow into adulthood as illiterates and this would further compound the problems of an estimated 43% adults that have missed their opportunities of a formal education. (FGN/UNICEF/UNESCO (1997). Monitoring of learning achievement (M.L.A.) project). It is for these categories of people that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) intends to provide a second chance.

For Nigeria to attain the desired 100% national literacy rate soon, it is imperative that provisions should be made and actions taken to universalize basic education, enthrone a conducive learning environment and improve quality and standards. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is designed to address these challenges.

In the light of the fore-going, it will be pertinent here to provide a highly succinct meaning of Universal Basic Education and what it constitutes. UBE is an educational reform programme of the Nigerian Government that provides free, compulsory, and continuous 9-year education at two levels: 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary education for all school aged children. There are three components of the UBE programme and these are:

- i. Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE)

- ii. 6 years primary Education
- iii. 3 years Junior Secondary School Education (JSS) (UBE, 2005).

Here in Rivers state, the enabling law for the implementation of compulsory, free universal Basic Education was formally signed into law on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2005 by Sir Dr. Peter Odili, the former Governor of Rivers State. Rivers State Universal Basic Education Law No.4 of 2005.

Under the existing 6-year secondary school arrangement, Junior Secondary School (JSS) is separated from the Senior Secondary School (SSS) and this is referred to as disarticulation. UBE(2005). In other words, the two levels should be run by two separate administrations and eventually have separate locations and infrastructures. The existing 6-year secondary education is in contradiction with the existing policy of 6-3-3-4 and is to be discontinued. To ensure effective and successful implementation of UBE programme:

- i. The Federal Government has provided matching grants totaling N35.98b between July 2005 and July 2006 for disbursement to the states as Federal Government UBE intervention fund.
- ii. Federal Government is further investing N10 billions of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) funds (from the debt relief granted by Paris Club of creditors in the following areas:
  - a. Provision of science kits to primary schools.
  - b. Improvement of teacher quality through in-service training for 145,000 teachers conducted by National Teacher Institute (N.T.I.) on annual basis.
  - c. Recruitment of additional 40,000 holders of Nigeria Certificate in Education under the Federal Teacher Service Scheme (FTSC) programme for a two-year Federal Government guaranteed remuneration. UBE (2005)
  - d. Programme implementation is guided by well-articulated quarterly Action Plans that ensures that funds are applied to areas of priority needs.

UBE has an all-embracing procedure for monitoring the utilization of disbursed funds and programme implementation. The issue of poor policy implementation cannot be overstressed as it has eaten deep into the federation of Nigeria such that Rivers State as a subset is not left out. This downtrend can be seen in the manner in which educational policies at all levels in Nigeria by extension River State are being administered and implemented. Hence, it is the purpose of this study to explore the various educational policies as contained in the National Policy on Education blueprint, and assess qualitatively the objectives of each educational policy, the proposed implementation strategies, the problems encountered, the situation in River State UBE Programme and the way forward. This will imply the use of individual observations, as well as a review of already existing literature in order to bring to fore the issues underlying policy implementation in the state. The specific focus of this paper is to assess the implementation strategies of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria and by extension Rivers State which constitute part of the foundational aspects of education in Nigeria.

Before the launching of UBE in 1999, primary school enrolment (education statistics) for 1996 showed that only 14.1 million pupils were registered out of 21 million children of school going age, 14.8 million in 1997 and 15.5 million in 1998 (FME, 2000). The 6.9 million children that were not registered and were not in school further compounded the illiteracy situation in the country. In addition, Nigeria has been facing the problem of recording low National literacy rate of 52%. An adjunct to this is the problem of teacher-pupil ratio which was put at 1:76. This is far from the World Bank ideal ratio of 1:25 (World Bank, 1998).

Closely related to the problems highlighted above is that of low levels of achievement in literacy, numeracy and life skills among pupils. A Federal Government/UNICEF and UNESCO sponsored study (FGN/UNICEF/UNESCO, 1997), which assessed the level of competence of primary four pupils in the three skills revealed very low levels of achievement. The national mean scores for numeracy, literacy and life-skills were 32.2%, 25.2% and 36.86% respectively (UBE, 2005). In the light of the foregoing, the question therefore, is how effective is the implementation of the Universal Basic Education in Rivers State policy, with regards to availability of facilities/infrastructures in order to avoid the pitfalls of the past and to ensure that the goals and objectives of the programme are achieved?

To provide answers to the above stated question, a single proposition of “there is no significant difference in UBE policy implementation and the availability of facilities/infrastructures in schools in Rivers State in 2008 to 2018.

This paper is structured into five interrelated parts. The first part is the introduction, which we just concluded. The second part is the analytical framework of the paper and brief explication of relevant concepts of the paper. The third part deals with the method the paper adopted in generating and analyzing data for the study, while the fourth part considers the presentation, analysis and discussion of findings of the paper. The fifth part and of course the final part is the conclusion/recommendations of the paper.

### **Analytical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on “Programme Evaluation theory” as propounded by potter. Programme evaluation theory is a systematic method for collecting analyzing and using information to answer basic questions about projects, policies and programmes. It is used in the public and private sectors. This study is related to the theoretical framework put forward by Potter.

Potter (2006) identified and described three board paradigms within programme evaluation. The first and probably most common, is the positivist approach in which evaluation can only occur when the objectives are observable and measurable as aspects of the programme, requiring predominantly quantitative evidence. The positivist approach includes evaluation dimensions such as needs assessment, assessment of programme theory, assessment of programme process, impact assessment and efficiency assessment (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004).

In the case of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the specific objectives of the scheme are five in number and they are observable and measurable. For instance, one can measure and observe the extent increased consciousness for education among the citizenry has been created which is the number one objective of the programme and this can be accessed through increased enrolment. The quantitative evidence is obtainable from the ministry of education and the state (Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

The second paradigm identified by Potter, (2006) is that of interpretive approaches, where it is argued that essentially the evaluator develops an understanding of the perspective, experiences and expectations of all stakeholders. This would lead to a better understanding of the various meanings and needs held by stakeholders which is crucial, before one is able to make a better

judgment about the merit or value of a programme.

Potter, (2006) interpretive approaches must be home in mind. The evaluation contact with the programme is often over an extended period of time and although there is no standardized method. Based on the second paradigm the expectation of all stakeholders as far as UBE programme is concerned is a marked reduction in dropout rate and the attainment of 100% literacy rate and not the present 52%.

Potter, (2006) also identified critical-emancipatory approaches to programme evaluation, which are largely based on action research for the purpose of social transformation. This type of approach is much more ideological and often includes a greater degree of social activist on the part of the evaluator because of its emphasis on participation and empowerment.

Potter (2006) argues that this type of evaluation can be particularly useful in developing countries. Despite the paradigm which is used in any programme evaluation, whether it is positivist, interpretive or critical-emancipatory, it is essential to acknowledge that evaluation takes in places of specific socio-political contexts. Evaluation does not exist in a vacuum and all evaluations whether they are aware of it or not, are influenced by socio-political factors. It is important to recognize the evaluations and the findings which result from this kind of evaluation process can be used in favor or against particular ideological, social and political agendas (Weiss 1999). This is specifically true in an age where resources are limited and there is competition between organizations for certain projects to be prioritized over others (Louw, 1999).

## **Conceptual Explication**

### **Concept of Policy**

A policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of organization must have a basis or a backing. Terry (1977: 1989) Considers that “a policy is an overall guide that gives the general limits and direction in which administrative action will take place”, According to him “a policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made but it does not give decisions”. A policy brings about a meaningful relationship between business objectives and organizational functions as it discourages deviations from planned courses of action. A policy does not have to be rigid, as there should be room for adjustment if necessary after its formulation. Perhaps this is why Hoy and Misket (1978, 215) believes that “policies are not only formulated but also programmed, communicated, monitored and evaluated” The non – rigid nature of policies is confirmed by Lindblom (1959, 86) when he describes policy – making as a “process of successive approximation to some desired objective in which what is desired itself continued to change under recommendation” in fact a good policy is one that can be reviewed where necessary. Lindblom is of the view that a wise policy maker cannot expect all the policies to achieve hundred percent success. Regardless of how good a policy may be; its implementation may introduce some element of imperfection.

Thomas R. Diye (1972) asserts that public policy could be seen as “whatever government choose to do or not to do”. He emphasizes that:

Government do many things, they regulate conflicts within society; they organize society to carry on conflict with other societies, they distribute a great verity of



symbolic reward and material services to members of the society; and they extract money from society, most often in the form of taxes.

Thus, public policies may regulate behavior, organized bureaucracies; distribute benefits, extract taxes or all of these things at once. Public policies may deal with a wide verity of substantive areas- defence, Education, energy, environment, foreign affairs, welfare, police, highways, taxation, housing, social security, health, economic opportunity, urban development, inflection, recession and so on. They may range from the vital to the trivial- from the allocation of tens of billions of dollars for a mobile massive system to the designation on an official natural bird. (T.R Diye. 1975, p.1).

In the same vein, another scholar Carl Fredrick defined policy as a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilized and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realized an objective or a purpose (Carl Friedrich 1963, 7a).

Given that policy should designate what is actually done rather than what is proposed or intended in the way of action on some matter, James Anderson defines policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem of matter or concern” (Anderson, 1978, 5).

Thus, public policies stem from the fact that they are formulated by what David Easton called authorities” in a political system, namely, elders, paramount chiefs, executives, legislators, judges, administrators, councilors, monarchy and the likes” These are, according to him, the persons who “engage in the daily affairs of a political system as having responsibilities for these matter”. Furthermore, they take actions that are acceptable as bonding most of the time by most of the members so long as they act within the limits of their roles” (Easton: 1965,212).

Expression of public policy include law, judicial decisions, treaties, executive rules and orders, local ordinances, administrative decisions or any rule of conduct behind which stands the enforcing power of the principle system. O.J Osai (2006,111) defines public policy as “The core government activity, it is referred to as a government programme of action. It thus stands for various degrees of goal articulation and normative regulation of government activities that is, what government intends to do or active (goal) and how it intends to do it” (implements).

Roe (1998, 34) defined public policy as: macro – level planning and decision -making, embracing other public sector interventions including field projects, departmental programs, sectorial strategies and bureaucratic reform”. Basically, public policy is concerned with providing tools and giving assessment of the cost and consequences of different alternative and explanation of why certain policy alternative are chosen and others are not. In essence, policy implementation involves putting into action the content of public policy, processing of the impact of environmental forces on the contact public policy, implementing the various institutional arrangement and political processes on public policy”.

### **The Concept of Educational Policy**

Educational policies are initiatives, mostly by governments that determine the direction of an educational system (Okoroma, 2000, 190) According to Awokoya (1981), educational policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. He is of the view that the objective of

any policy is to satisfy individual needs, community pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which socialized personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands. The following consideration, according to Awokoye (1981), are necessary to guide the formulation of adequate educational policy.

1. It should be formulated and adopted through a political process which acknowledges the reality and legitimacy of conflicting interests and desired among its participants.
2. It should portray some elements of guidance for properly directed and coordinated action towards the attainment of the desired goals.
3. It should contain information on the broad objectives that should be reached.

It should be a binding guide on the actions of those implementing it.

It should be enforceable and enforced by the society which formulate it.

Kerr (1976) believes that for a policy to qualify as an educational policy, it must be distinct from other policies. In his view, educational policies are distinguishable from other policies by the fact that policies on education are part and parcel of educational institutions. However, it is important to note that not all policies formulated in educational institutions can qualify as educational policies. Generally, policies must be rational and purposeful to enable them stand the test of time.

### **Public Policy Implementation**

Lennon (2009) opines that policy is recognized as plan or course of action by a government, political party or business designed to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters. Virtually all aspects of societal enterprise are now the object of policy, a dynamic and value laden process through which a political system handles a public problem (plank, styles & Schneider, 2009. Bolaji, 2014). Thus, a policy may be seen as a written or unwritten guideline that prescribes what is to be done, how it is to be done, where it is to be done, and who is to do it. It can also be added that policies are formulated in both formal and informal institutions, with the difference being in the documentation of such policies and the implementation techniques. Public policy Implementation is concerned with how did the actual conduct of the policy conform to the original intentions. Was the policy effective and efficient, what were achieved? Why was the policy eventually terminated?

There are different types of policy. The more conventional method is to classify them into categories based on the subject matter such as agricultural policy, educational policy, health policy, industrial policy welfare policy, transport policy, rural or urban development policy reform policy etc.

However, a different policy classification scheme has also been proffered. This approach distinguishes three broad categories of public policy within which the various types enumerated above are subsumed. These categories are distributive policy, regulatory policy and redistributive policy. Distributive policy refers to the policies through which government distributes benefits to particular groups on a highly individualized basis such as tariffs, government contracts. They are not perceived to be imposing costs. Regulatory policy are policies that defines permissible, or impermissible behaviour such as the imposition rules concerning pollution by government on industry and rules regulating behaviour of private broadcasting stations in Nigeria while Re-

distributive policy. These are policies that in effect take benefits from one group and give them to another. Progressive taxation and social welfare policies are telling examples.

From the forgoing, it could be seen that the topic under review falls under REDISTRIBUTIVE policy, given that a set of people are benefiting from benefits accrued from another group of people in the same society.

### **Concept of Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is designed to offer free basic and compulsory education by ensuring an uninterrupted access to 10 years formal education by providing free and compulsory Basic Education for every child of school-group age under. Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living. There are three components of the UBE programme which include: - 1 Year Early childhood care and Development Education (ECCDE), 6 Years primary Education and 3 Years Junior Secondary School Education (JSS) UBE (2005).

It would be expedient to mention in this study that the current Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria is a product of an earlier education scheme policy, programme and decision which could be said to have been bedeviled by problems and which the present scheme is expected to correct. More so, the federal government of Nigeria became conscious of the dangers of disparity in educational development in a nation state and therefore introduced the UPE scheme throughout the Federation in 1976. Thereafter there was the regularization of primary education system throughout Nigeria. The difference that had existed in the different regions were checked by the federal government's decision that all states of the federation must run similar programmes (Itedjere, 1997).

The recent re-launching of a similar programme -the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme by the federal government of Nigeria on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1999 would suggest that after the failure of the earlier programme – UPE scheme, a careful analysis of the factors that brought about the failure of the earlier scheme would have taken place. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a programme designed to transmit a common cultural heritage. The training of children and adolescents in the norms, values and aspirations of the nation are veritable instruments for social integration and development. It is expected that educational reforms or re-organization would be carried out to enable Nigerian Education cater for the future professional needs (Ayene; 2000).

In its bid to play the noble role of cultural transmission in the modern society today, the UBE policy is designed to provide universal literacy, numeracy and enlightenment. The desire is to inculcate in the children the skills of literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate which made UBE programme worthwhile (Abouyi, 2004).

The UBE policy, if faithfully implemented by government, will not only be a powerful instrument for achieving poverty alleviation, but also, a secured means of ensuring proper and adequate internalization of sound democratic culture. As a matter of fact, this type of political socialization is what we need in order to stabilize our polity which will in turn guarantee economic growth and development (Osahon and Osahon, 2006.)



Before the launch of the UBE scheme, the transition rate from primary school to Junior Secondary School was 43.7%. By implication 56.3% of those in the nation's primary school today are likely to grow into adults that have missed their opportunities of a formal education. It is for these categories of people that the universal Basic Education (UBE) tends to provide a second chance (UBE 2000).

For Nigeria to attain the desired 100% national literacy rate soon, it is imperative that provisions should be made and actions taken to Universalized Basic Education enthrone a conducive learning environment and improve quality and standards. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is designed to address these challenges.

### **School Based Management Committees (SBMC)**

Global experience has shown that encouraging school communities to be involved in planning, management and improvement of schools in their domains/environments can make a big difference in the development of schools. Recent global reform agenda on improving governance and accountability in the education sector focuses on decentralization of school governance and devolving responsibilities to structures and groups closer to schools. It is against this background that school Based Management Committees were established to strengthen partnership between schools and communities towards school improvement thereby given members of the school's community responsibility and urging them to lead the process of ensuring effective programmes and accountability in the delivery of education services.

Thus, the prime purpose of SBMC is to improve schools through the School- Based Management Committees (SBMC's), act as bridges between schools and the communities they serve. They take part in school development planning and sensitize community members on the need to support school improvement initiatives. They generate community support as well as carry out oversight functions on the school.

The vision of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) in SBMC was therefore to put up a strategy for school development whereby community Self-Help Initialed projects would be implemented by the SBMCs. Thus, since globally, the SBMCs have been recognized as school development agents, the approach will also have the advantage of increasing the functionality of the SBMC's and be a vehicle for facilitating grassroots advocacy, sensitization and mobilization in favour of school development, enrollment and retention of all categories of children in schools in Rivers State. Given that the UBE programme is stakeholder-based is not in doubt for it to succeed. However, it must be driven by stakeholders and the master strategy required for its success is an effective social mobilization process. But, although social mobilization activities are critical in moving basic education forward, the Board is worried that the necessary ingredients and strategies for effective social mobilization for basic education delivery are grossly lacking, especially at Local Governments and Community levels.

SBMC is a school Based Management Committee (SBMC). It is established by Government to act as a bridge between the school system and the local communities where the schools are domiciled. It's also intense to contribute to the decision making at the school level to enhance learning. SBMCs are volunteer groups made up of people who represent the school community which may include pupils, teachers, parents, community based group interested in education.

They meet regularly and organize activities to improve the way school operate and support the government responsibility of ensuring quality education for all.

1. SBMC is not a political organization
2. It does not attract remuneration SBMC should not be gender or religious biased.
3. It is not limited to parent with children in the school.
4. It must not be one man affair, SBMCs are Community Committee empowered to take action to improve their schools.

SBMC in Rivers State has been in place since August 2006 but there has not been a clear understanding of what SBMC members should do or how they should work with schools and wider community. It is in 2010 that a policy guild line was formulated and in 2011a revised National Guild Line for the development of SBMCs was issued by UBEC, Abuja.

The programme is designed to provide support towards the execution of community initiated self-help priority-based projects in public primary schools through the SBMCs with a view to enhancing access equity and quality in basic education delivery in Nigeria. It is also expected that the initiative will serve as a tool for reducing the challenge of out-of-school children in Nigeria. The programme will give priorities to the rural communities and urban poor settlements. However, urban communities with outstanding needs for school improvement would be considered for support.

The School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) have a pivotal role to play in the decentralisation process by acting as linkages between governments at state and local levels, local communities, schools and non-state actors in matters affecting governance.

#### **Key Elements of good governance that a functional SBMC is capable of rendering are:**

1. Transparencies
2. Accountability
3. Effectiveness and Efficiency
4. Responsiveness;
5. Equity and Inclusiveness
6. Participation
7. Rule of law
8. Consensus Building

The policy document of SBMC in Rivers State provides the framework for the establishment of functional School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) in all public schools in River State with overall goal of entrenching good governance at the school performance and improved learning outcomes of all students through the active participation of all stakeholders. The implementation of this policy document shall be in line with amended State Universal Basic Education Law (2011) and the provision of other education law of Rivers State.

#### **Objectives of SBMC –School Improvement Programme**

The specific objectives of SBMC-SIP are to:

1. Promote the functionality of SBMCs in school development;
2. Provide communities opportunities to collaborate with government agencies by initiating, funding and execution of access, quality driven educational projects;

3. Increase involvement and participation of the SBMCs and other community members in school governance;
4. Increase management skills acquired by SBMCs and other community members in school project execution;
5. Promote advocacy, sensitization and mobilisation of the school community in support of basic education;
6. Increase school enrolment, retention and completion rates;
7. Increase and improve school infrastructure and learning environment;
8. Reduce cost of project execution by government;
9. Reduce number of out-of-school children and promote girls participation in schools; and
10. Promote private partnership and sustainability of school development initiative by SBMCs and enlarged school communities.

### **The Objectives of UBE Programme in Nigeria**

The following are the objectives of UBE programme according to FRN (2013).

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. The precious compulsory, free and Universal Basic Education for every Nigeria child or school going age.
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.
4. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of Basic Education for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling; and
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values necessary for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

### **Rivers State Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy Programme**

In exploring the study Effective Implementation of Public Policy in Rivers State, a study of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Rivers State between 2010 -2018. It will be pertinent to take a critical look at the management of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board, and the policy objectives of the Board between 2010-2018.

Hence, it must be pointed out here that the management of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) considering the period under review, was inaugurated on Friday, July 24, 2009 by His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amechi as earlier stated in chapter one of this study, with the following policy objectives which are to:

1. Manage Primary and Junior Secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Recruit, appoint, promote, motivate and discipline Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff (ECCDE, Primary and Junior Secondary).
3. Effectively supervise teaching and learning activities.
4. Establish a Basic Education Data Bank and conduct research on basic education in Rivers State.

5. Liaise with other bodies and co-ordinate the implementation of Universal Basic Education related activities in Rivers State.
6. Develop and disseminate Curriculum and instruction;
7. Provide guidelines and estimates on the establishment of New Schools and Capital Projects; and,
8. Perform any functions incidental to the above as may be directed by the Honorable Commissioner for Education or the Governor.

In order to achieve these goals, the River State Universal Basic Education Board is structured into the following Departments, namely:

1. Academic Services
2. Quality Assurance
3. Social Mobilization
4. Planning, Research and Statistics
5. Special Projects
6. Finance and Accounts
7. Junior Secondary
8. Primary
9. Physical Planning
10. Early Child Care Development Education (ECCDE)
11. Academics Services
12. Teachers Development Department
13. Administration and Supplies

It would be recalled that shortly after being sworn-in as Governor, in 2007, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi declared a “state of Emergency” in the Education sector in Rivers State. The near total collapse of the school system occasioned by the dilapidated infrastructure, low personnel morale and lack of commitment by pupils precipitates the action of the Governor.

In the bid to remedy the ugly situation the following steps and approaches which were employed by the Governor and the UBE Board in Rivers State include:

1. The taking over of payment of salaries of teaching and Non-teaching staff from the 23 Local Government Councils in Rivers State, including payment of arrears of salaries, Leave Bonus and promotion.
2. Embarking on a project of construction of 750 Model 14 classroom block schools equipped with state-of-the-art information and Technology (IT), and Laboratory Equipment. As at October, 2010, 125 of them had been completed and ready for use while another 350 are at various milestones prelude completion. When completed, these will provide accommodation for more than 250,000 pupils at 30 pupils per classroom.
3. Payment of outstanding Counterpart funds in order to access Federal Government Intervention Funds (matching Grant) from the Universal Basic Education Commission. These are now being utilized for the construction and equipping of additional 23, 14 Classroom Model.
4. Obtained approval from the Education Tax Fund (ETF) to access intervention funds from 2007 till date;

5. Conduct of Promotion Interviews spanning 2007 to 2010 Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff of the Primary and Junior Secondary Sectors.
6. Capacity building of Personnel in the form of:
  - a. Workshop on Effective Teaching of English Language, Introductory Technology, Mathematics and Science for JSS 1-3, January 2010
  - b. Workshop on Role of School-based Management Committee on Self-Help Projects/JSS Systems, January 2010;
  - c. Workshop on Basic Computer Training for primary school Teachers, January 2010;
  - d. Workshop on Enhancing Pedagogical Skills for JSS 1-3 Teachers, February 2010
  - e. 2010 Professional Development Workshop for Primary School Teachers
  - f. Training Workshop for JSS Teachers of English based on the New Curriculum for JSS 1-3
  - g. MDG Workshops
  - h. Training of primary 1 and JSS 1 Teachers on the implementation of the new 9-year Basic Education Guidelines.
  - i. Workshop for newly appointed supervisor covering innovative methodology in Quality Curriculum Delivery, and Effective Record Keeping.
  - j. Introduction of State Achievement Test on Primary Three, Four and Five Pupils in Public Primary schools.
  - k. Scheduled quarterly supervision of schools. The Ministry of Education under Dame Alice Lawrence Nemi has a capacity building programme with the British Council for our teachers and Education Managers
7. Restructuring of Schools and Operations:
  - a. Schools were merged into more viable entities; and
  - b. The appointment of Head Teachers, Principals and their Deputies was streamlined, using standards of justice and fairness based on seniority; and
  - c. The Board Headquarters was equally re-structured within six months
8. Giving Free Education Real Meaning  
To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Celebration in October 2010, the state Government instituted a programme of giving uniforms, sandals and books to pupils. Thus, the emergency measures which began with infrastructure and personnel motivation, has been extended to pupils, parents and guardians. Ultimately, complaints about inability to afford uniforms or shoes will be in a dim memory if not in this generation.
9. Recognition of Honours and Awards  
Not surprisingly, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) adjudge Rivers SUBEB the best performing in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Other NGOs and similar bodies have identified the Board and its managers for various honors and awards during the period.

Undoubtedly, the Rivers State Universal Basic Education (UBE) Board has striven to fulfil its mandate with inspiration and tremendous support from the State Governor, the Rt. Honorable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi and the Ministry of Education. The creative infrastructural development, the capacity building and motivational programmes for personnel, pupils and parents are giving effect to the objectives of free education and inclusiveness of persons, irrespective of their physical, spatial or psychological circumstances. It is safe to argue that the



present administration in Rivers State and management of the Board are leaving a legacy that would serve as beacon and milestone to subsequent education managers- whether as designers or implementers of policy.

In the bid to achieve the set objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Rivers State as contained in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) law No. 4, of 2005. The state medium term Basic Education Strategic plans was developed in 2017. While the implementation took off in 2018.

With its policy objective as follows: -

1. To provide equitable access to basic education
2. To assume quality and relevance in education
3. To improve school infrastructure
4. To enhance the planning and management system
5. To mobilize resource and sustainable funding for basic education.

While the main features of the Medium Term Basic Education Strategic Plans (MTBESP) include the following:

1. Out of school children
2. Adult literacy
3. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
4. Basic Education
5. Teacher Education
6. Basic Education Curriculum Policy
7. Education data and planning Information and Communication Technology (ICT) 100. Library service in Education. (RSUBEB 2017)

It would be recalled that Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) embarked on that strategic plain in responses to the (UBEC) clarion call for the (SUBEBs) to develop a people owned and people-driven education sector strategic and operational plan using minds and hands on processes and also to provide a tool for Education reform through a sector- wide analysis.

## **Method**

This paper adopted the ex-post-facto research design. Kerlinger (1986) defined ex-post-factor type of research as a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or they are inherently not possible to be manipulated. Putting it clearly, Weiersman (1991) disclosed that in an ex-post-facto research, the researcher begins with the observation of a dependent variable and follow by a retrospective study of possible relationships and effects. In such a study, inferences about relationship among variables are made without direct interaction from concomitant variables of independent and dependent variables.

The population of this study consisted of all the public primary schools in Rivers State which is 962 Primary schools and 370 Junior Secondary Schools which gives us 1,332 Public schools and 1,332 Head teachers. These were the figures as at December 2021 (Rivers State Ministry of Education).

A sample of 600 schools was purposively adopted for this study for proper spread of samples, samples were drawn along the three senatorial district that makeup the state. Four Local

Government Areas were used from each senatorial district, bringing the number of Local Government Areas that were used in the study to 12 out of a total number of 23 local government areas in the state. Each senatorial district was further divided into urban and rural when selecting primary school head teachers and their class teachers. The breakdown was as follows:

**Table 1**

S/N	Senatorial districts	Urban Areas	Rural Areas	Total
1	Rivers East	100	100	200
2	Rivers West	100	100	200
3	Rivers South-East	100	100	200

The data collected for this paper were analyzed using gross enrolment ratio, growth rate, teachers/pupils ratio, t-test and diagrammatic representation. Specifically, teacher/pupil ratio was used to analyze the question while variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance

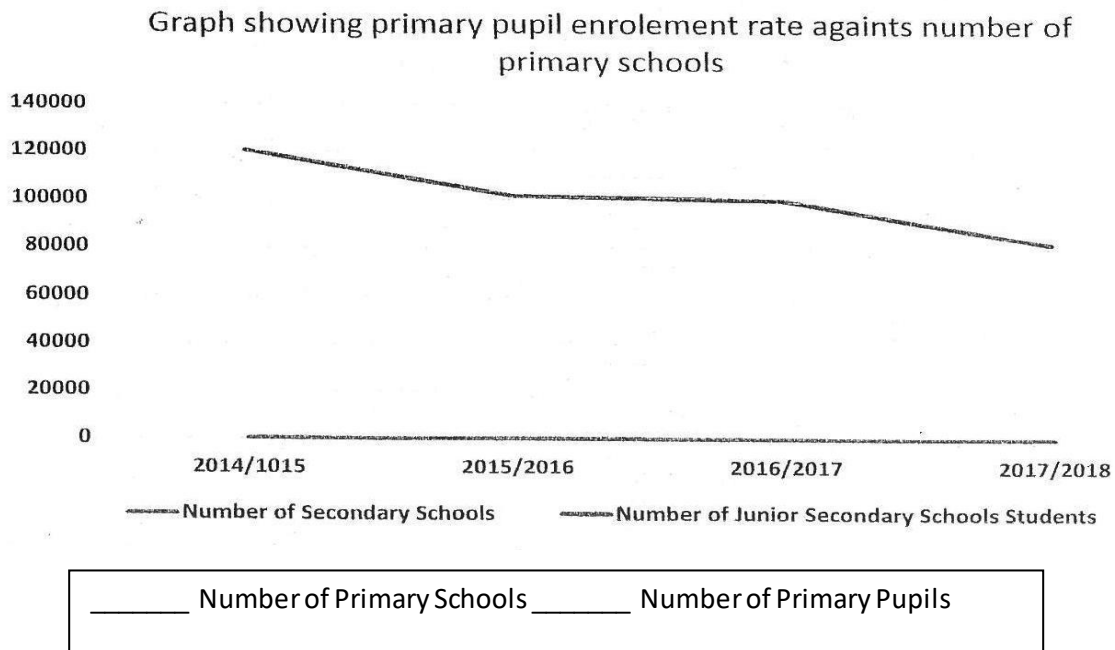
### Presentation, Analysis and Discussions

**Table 2:** Total primary pupil's enrollment rate in Rivers State in relationship with number of primary schools from (2014-2018)

S/N	Category	Indicators	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	Total
1	Primary Schools	Number of Primary schools	941	956	956		4030
	-	Number of Primary school pupils	243473	186623	178919	178175	787190

**Sources:** Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board

**Fig 4.1 primary school pupils' enrollment rate against number of primary schools in Rivers State from 2014 and 2019**

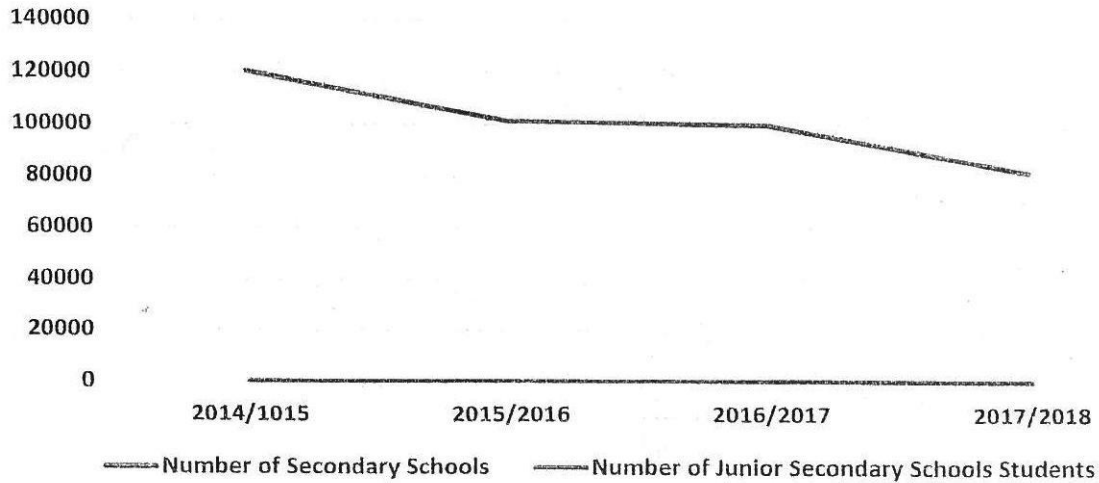


**Fig 1:** primary school pupils' enrollment rate against number of primary schools in Rivers State from 2014 and 2018

**Table 3:** Total Secondary School Student's enrollment rate against number of Secondary Schools in Rivers State from(2014-2018)

S/N	Category	Indicators	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	Total
1	Secondary Schools	Number of Secondary schools	267	267	280	315	1129
		Number of Junior Secondary School Students	120503	101514	99840	81798	403655

**Sources:** Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board



**Fig 4.2 Secondary school students' enrollment rate against number of primary schools in Rivers State from 2014 and 2018**

As can be observed from fig 2 above regardless the significant increase in the number of primary schools within 2014 to 2018, the enrollment took a nose dive from 243473 in 2014/2015 academic year to 178175 in 2017/2018 academic year. The same can be said of junior secondary school students' enrollment within the same period. This situation which respondents associated with the growing rate of unemployment, poverty, crisis, militancy, internal displacement as a result of flood, location of schools and poor awareness, to mention but a few. The World Bank and State EMIS survey (2015) showed that over 110654 students both boys and girls are out of school. This according to Mercy Echendu of Olobon Premier Collage Choba "these is a clear indication that the implementation of UBE policy has not done well in ensuring that students within the primary and junior secondary school age benefits from its investment in education in the State (Echendu, M. 27/10/2021, oral interview). Mr. Christian Nwobilor of St. Stephen primary school Omoku, singled out the location of the school as one of the key factor militating against the enrollment of students in the state, he cited a case where ST Stephen primary school is located over 40km from Ogba. He pointed out that this factor is enough to keep students' away from schools as it has a way of killing interest for education considering the stress associated with walking such a distance to access the school. (Nwobilor, C. 29/10/2021, oral interview).

### Question

How effective is the implementation of the UBE policy with regards to the availability of facilities/infrastructures?

The need to provide infrastructures by the Government was clearly stated in the UBE implementation blueprint. The purpose was to ensure that there are adequate classrooms, libraries, buildings, laboratories, and other materials for effective teaching and learning. The implementation of this strategy is highly questionable especially given the fact that many primary schools are utilizing buildings that are dilapidated and worn out. In River State, many public secondary and primary schools lack such infrastructures as buildings, adequate classrooms, laboratories, and so on. Not only in rural schools can this be seen, it is common

place even in urban areas like Bori, some parts of Port Harcourt Municipal/ Obio/Akpor and Eleme. In one study, it was noted that there are infrastructures which were provided to be able to deliver basic education in Rivers State, however, just as any other resources, like books and other learning materials, they are insufficient to meet the goals of the program, and to ensure access by everyone. There is also a shortage of space to accommodate the requirements of the universal basic education. This is basically because the education facilities did not expand in accordance with the growth of the student population. Many of the buildings are already deteriorating, resulting in the creation of learning environments which are not conducive at all.

The government has an essential role to play in the growth and development of young people. In addition to the vital role that the government are expected to play in a child's education, the government has a responsibility to ensure high quality learning infrastructure and amenities for all students (Akin, 2016). The involvement of the UBE scheme and initiative in education is expected to correlates with the availability of facilities in the implementation of their policies. During the time of the former governor Chibike Rotimi Amaechi's administration, with Dane Alice Lawrence Nemi as the commissioner for education, Sir Alli Oruitemeka as Executive Chairman, RSUBEB and Gillis Idoniboyeobu as project manager, the UBE was able to procure and supply ICT. And instructional materials to over 58 schools in the state and furniture's and outdoor playing facilities were also provided to the schools (RSUBEBE, 2015). But in recent times according to Sir Kananga, principal in Bori Khana Local government area, these facilities are dilapidated, bad and poorly maintained with no plans for replacement (Kananga, O.A. 30/10/2021, oral interview).

**Proposition:** There is no significant difference in UBE policy implementation with regards to the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods

**Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing significant difference in the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods**

Sources of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean sum of squares	F-value	p-value	Decision
Between group	3.596	2	.360	1.936	.037	H <sub>0</sub>
Within group	176.466	385	.186			Retained
<b>Total</b>	<b>180.062</b>	<b>387</b>				

\* Significant,  $p > 0.05$

Table 4 shows the One-Way ANOVA of significant difference in the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods. The findings of this study shows that there was significant difference in the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods [ $F(2, 385) = 1.936; p > 0.05$ ]. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant



difference in the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted.

There was significant difference in the availability of facilities/infrastructures and schools in Rivers State in 2010 to 2018 UBE declaration periods [ $F(2, 385) = 1.936; p > 0.05$ ].

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The growing trend of the government and its various arms issuing for strategies that will help improve schools, teaching, learning and administrative efficiency have seen the emergence of various ideas, bodies and schemes which the UBE is not left out. The emergence of the UBE has since seen the adoption of various strategies directed towards the overall improvement of education across Nigeria. To achieve these objectives and more, the UBE came up with policies and laws although peculiar with individual state. The Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board was not left out as it put out UBE law in 2005 with the provision of free compulsory universal basic education forming the first item of the law amidst other laws.

But the situations of education in the state have not been palatable, thus this prompted the interest of this paper.

Findings show that the state of education in the state is not in consonant with the objectives of the UBE in the face of its many laws. The finding further shows that the number of students out of school is increasing over the years, and the number of qualified teachers are in short supply with respect to the World Bank standards. Also deduced from the paper is the understanding that the idea for free compulsory basic education is only but an illusion as its not operational in the state, and finally learning facilities, and materials are in a state of comatose.

Hence the paper concludes that the universal Basic Education Policy in Rivers State from 2010 to 2018 has not hit the ground running as a result of the challenges of implementation of UBE policy programme in Rivers State, finding its tangibility in publication and lip services, but invisible in the state. Or rather, the Universal Basic Education Policy in Rivers State from 2010 to 2018 has been misplaced.

Based on the findings of the paper, the researcher recommends that:

1. Schools should be sited in a location nearer to the people, though this calls for more schools to be built.
2. The state government should come up with programmes to recruit and train more teachers, in order to make appreciable numbers of teachers available to meet expected standards.
3. More effort should be made by the government to involve the schools and the home front in coming up with programme that will drive the objectives of the UBE in the state.
4. The state government should devise a more inclusive strategy that will ultimately see the enforcement of the free education for every child within the UBE age. This can be done by adopting the “parent/teacher team of monitors and enforcers of this policy.

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