

The Challenges of Teacher Training Institutions in the Implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria

¹Amos, Ayuba Dzamghura.
& ²Adamu, Hussaini Ladags
*Department of Agricultural
Science Education,
College of Education, PMB1502
Wake-Biu, Brono State*

Abstract

This study examines the challenges of teacher training institutions in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria. The search for Universal Education in Nigeria dated back to 1976 with Universal Primary Education (UPE), later 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1982 and now Universal Basic Education (UBE) which started in 1999. Universal Education under whatever name have suffered similar fate. One of the challenges that has limited the success of universal education is the problem of teachers to implement the programme. Three major challenges were identified to affect teacher education programmes in Nigeria, these are: challenges associated with the process of selecting teacher education candidates, challenges associated with the programme of study during training of student teachers and challenges associated with institutional factors which include staffing, physical facilities and funding. The study recommend improved funding of the educational sector by the government and proper monitoring of fund released to curtail embezzlement, reviewing the process of selecting students to be enrolled for teacher training programmes, proper compensation of teachers through higher pay and making teaching profession competitive, giving bonus to teachers who perform well either through improved student performance, improved student behavior or other methods of professional assessment, more effort to train prospective teachers and retraining of existing ones.

*Keywords: Education, Teacher Training Institutions,
Universal Basic Education (UBE), Challenges*

Background to the Study

Education in its broadest sense provides the back drop against which development acquires its meaning. Education is generally concerned with the transmission of worthwhile values such as skills, knowledge and planned activities that can develop the learners' potentials for national development (Ochoyi & Danladi, 2008). In realization of the role which education plays in national development, the government of Nigeria ventured into various education policies and programmes with great expectations that the felt socio-economic needs of the citizenry will be met. One of the policies that have evolved over the years is the universal primary Education (UPE) programme introduced by the federal government in 1976. However, decades after the introduction of the UPE, the educational outcomes showed that the national educational objectives were not fully realized due to certain national problems such as financial problems, insufficient qualified teachers, overcrowded class rooms, narrow curriculum content and high rate of drop-out (Fafunwa, 1986)

Another educational policy tried by the Nigerian government was the 6-3-3-4-4 system of education. It was introduced nation-wide by the federal government in 1982. This system of education required a child to spend six years in primary school, three years in junior secondary school, another three years in the senior secondary school and four year in a tertiary institution. It replaced the 6-5-4 system that was in operation before its introduction. Most of the educational policies and programmes pursued in Nigeria were always implemented without a reliable assessment of the country's need, without proper funding and without monitoring and evaluation (Gideon & Saka'a, 2008). Consequently, despite the 6-3-3-4 system, the rate of illiteracy was still high, the condition of school infrastructures deplorable, unemployment, crime and other vices were still high (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). The poor implementation strategy led to the non attainment of the national objectives of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The general outcry in the fallen standard of the universal primary Education and the inability of the 6-3-3-4 system of education to attain its national objectives and a sharp depreciation in the morals of the primary school children brought about, the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) by the federal government in September 1999. The programme was intended to be universal free and compulsory education (Adunola, 2011).

The teacher is an important and indispensable tool in the achievement of educational goals in all education institutions. He is the centre of knowledge and learning. Curriculum process in Nigeria can be considered as consisting of three levels – what is intended, what is implemented and what is learnt or attained. Curriculum reform can therefore only be effective if teachers are trained and equipped with skills to implement the intended curriculum and such training does not always hold for all teachers (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). The goal of teacher education in Nigeria include among others, the encouragement of the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teacher and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be adequate for their assignment and also make them adaptable to the changing situations (FME,

National policy on education, 2004). Section 8b (item 74) of the policy noted that teacher education shall continue to take cognizant of changes in methods and curriculum and teacher to be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. Policy stipulation therefore, the professional training of a teacher is in two fold; pre-service and in-service training. To implement this, certain institutions are charged with the responsibility to provide professional training for teachers (Adeosun, 2009). The training institution include: Faculties/Institutes of Education of universities; Collages of Education; National Teachers' Institution (NTI); Schools of Education in the Polytechnics and National Mathematical Centers and National institute of Nigerian Languages.

Despite the existence of these training institutions and their effort to train professional teachers, the efficiency of the training programmes in Nigeria to prepare teachers for the 21st century is still questionable. Teachers training institutions have been critiqued for their inability to collaborate professionally in a working environment and hence their ability to groom competent teachers for effective implementation of the UBE programme is doubtful. However, this work attempts to determine the challenges associated with the teacher training institutions in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Teacher Education and Teacher Training Institutions in Nigeria

According to Wikipedia, (2013), Teacher Education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behavior and skills they require to perform their task effectively in the class room, school and wider community. The success of an educational enterprise particularly in terms of quantity depends to a large extent on the regular supply of teachers in adequate quality and quality. According to National Commission for Collages Education (NCCE) (2012), the teacher is the king – pin of quality education. Since education has become the primary tool for the overall development of society, teacher education has to occupy a position of pre-eminence in the planning and organization of modern society. Expectedly, the mission of teacher education in Nigeria according to NCCE should among others include:

1. Production of well motivated teachers with high personal and professional discipline, integrity and competence for all the levels of educational system.
2. Preparation of teacher with appreciable expertise in curriculum planning development and delivery as well as competence in research, guidance and counseling.
3. Production of professionals who can combine the use of conventional teaching strategies and world's unfolding ICT in generation and imparting of knowledge, attitude and skills.
4. Continuous preparation and upgrading of teacher who can stand out for professional competence, sense of responsibility and commitment to function effectively as constructive socio – economic, moral and spiritual change – agent

needed to promote goodwill, peace and progress not only in the country but also in the world of the 21st century.

Quality teacher education programme, apart from producing qualified teachers to the education system, can also contribute to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in various ways. It is obvious that the attainment of the universal primary education components of the MDGs as well as proper implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme depends on the availability of teachers in sufficient numbers and sufficient quality to complete the task (Ejeh, 2009). To fulfill the visions and missions of teacher education in Nigeria, certain institutions are charged with the responsibility to provide professional training for teachers. The institutions according to Adeosun (2009) include:

1. Faculties/Institutes of Education of universities train teachers for secondary (high) schools by offering Bachelor of Education (B.ed.) degree programme to both senior secondary school graduates and senior secondary school teachers who already have National Certificate in Education (NCE) qualifications. They also offer masters and doctorate degree programme in education.
2. College of Education offer post-secondary NCE training programme that train teachers for primary and junior secondary school (basic education). The NCE has become the minimum qualification for primary school teachers as from 1998. Some of the colleges also offer NCE pre – primary courses in order to produce teachers for the pre – primary level of Education. The NCE programme according to NCCE, being a major sector of teacher education generally aim at producing teachers with high personal and professional discipline and integrity, teachers who are dedicated, with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude that would facilitate easy achievement of the national goal spelt out. The NCE according to Adeosun represent a classic design of teacher education in Nigeria.
3. The National Teachers Institute (NTI); was established to provide refresher and upgrading courses for practicing teachers; organize workshops, seminars and conferences as well as formulate policies and initiate programmes that would lead to improvement in the quality and content of education in the country. In pursuit of these responsibilities the institute initiated training and retraining programmes for helping unqualified primary teachers. Recently, the institution also embarked on the Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE) programmes through a distance learning (DLS) `it also provides training for the Pivotal Teachers Training Programme (PTTP) by means of distance learning system which was introduced in 2002 as a means of producing teachers to fill the gap in teacher supply for the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

4. Schools of Education in Polytechnics: offer diploma programmes for the production of teachers for the Technical and Vocational Collages.
5. National Mathematical Centre and National institutes of Nigerian Languages: organize specialized training in content and pedagogical skills for in service teachers. They also develop instructional materials for use in schools: The requirements for various teacher training programmes differ from one level to the other in terms of academic qualifications.

The Background of Universal Basic Education Programmer (UBE)

Basic education is the foundation upon which the secondary and tertiary levels of education are built (Oji, 2013). According to popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009) the concept of UBE may not be a new idea totally. From all indications, the universal education can be regarded as an off shoot of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme which was launched in the country in 1976. As usual with Nigeria, this scheme (UPE) was abandoned mid-way (Aluede, 2006). The fact that the scheme that is UPE had something to offer perhaps led to re-introduction of the programme in another name and concept known as UBE in 1999 and passed into law in 2004. The UBE According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), (2004) shall be nine years duration comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non formal education and out of school youth. UBE has three main components: Universal, Basic and Education. Universal here means the programme is for everyone irrespective of the tribe, culture or race and class (Aluede, 2006, Eddy & Akpan, 2009). The term basic depicts that which is fundamental or essential thing that must be given or had. It is on this factors that every other thing rests on. Without it, nothing may be achieved. It is the root for acquisition of any knowledge. Hence UBE can be seen as that type of education that every individual must have. It should not be a privilege but a right and it should be the sum total of an individual's experience.

The vision statement according to UBE (2000) is that after nine years of continuous education, every child through the system should be able to acquire appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, communication, manipulative and life skills and be employable, useful to him and the society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic skills. Similarly, the mission statement is: to serve as a prime energizer of national movement for the actualization of the national UBE vision working in contact with all stake holders thus, mobilizing the nation's creative energies to ensure that education for all (UBE) becomes the responsibility of all.

Objectives of UBE

The major objectives of implementing UBE include the following;

- a. Ensuring unaltered access to nine years of formal basic education.
- b. Provision of free universal education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- c. Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.

- d. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulation, communication skill as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needful for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Obong, (2006) further outlined the specific goals of the programme as follows:

- a. Ensuring an un-interrupted access to nine years formal education by providing free and compulsory universal basic education to every child of school going age.
- b. Reducing school dropout rate and improving relevance, quality and efficiency.
- c. Providing mid- day meals to enhance children's access retention and completion of the school cycle.
- d. Ensuring individuals acquire literacy, numeracy, life skills and useful living.
- e. Emphasizing on curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations.
- f. Disarticulating junior secondary schools from senior secondary schools.
- g. Realigning/Integrating junior secondary school education with primary education.
- h. Individualizing teaching method.
- i. Ensuring appropriate teacher professional development.
- j. Introducing rudiment of computer literacy.
- k. Encouraging community ownership of schools including participating in decision making process in schools.

With the passage of the UBE act, all tiers of Government in the country are mandated to provide free, compulsory nine years universal basic education to children of primary and junior secondary school age. Parents are required to ensure that their children register for and complete the basic education cycle (Ejeh, 2009). There are sanctions for parents who do not comply. In addition to free tuition, the act provides for free service in all public primary and junior secondary schools (Obong, 2006). In order to ensure effective implementation of the UBE, the act established the UBE commission, with prescribed functions membership terms and structure. UBE Board (UBEB) was also established at the state and Local Government levels so as to make it more accessible to the local communities.

The Challenges of Teacher Education and Teacher Training Institutions

According to Ejeh, (2009) the product of teacher education programme of Nigerian universities and colleges of education who are the main producer of teachers are bound to be of low quality as three major factor that determine quality (i.e. the process of selecting teacher education candidates, the programme of study during the training of student teachers and institutional factors which include staffing, physical, facilities and funding) do not work in favour of academic excellence in most Nigerian teacher education institutions.

1. Problems Associated with the Process of Selecting Teacher Education Candidates

Many of the students in the nation's faculties of education are those who could not gain admission into other faculties and departments and have chosen to enter into teacher education programme as a last resort. Most of them are therefore, neither interested in nor committed to the programme. Although the federal government has prescribed the National Certificate in Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification for teaching many of the students seeking admission into the colleges of education are those that could not pass the university matriculation examination for entry into the nation's universities. A large proportion of the students in colleges are those that do not have requisite qualifications but are admitted through the colleges' preliminary studies programme (Ejeh, 2003). Some colleges even admit those students who could not pass the relevant papers at the General certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level on the condition that the affected students pledge to pass those subjects before they can be awarded their certificates following their studies in the colleges.

According to the National Commission for College of Education (NCCE) (2002), while the demand for qualified teachers is ever increasing, the enrolment has continued to dwindle. Jibril (2005) reported that within the higher institution cycle, the colleges of education attract the least number of candidates. While the universities enroll about 56% of the total enrolment the polytechnic enrolls 30% of the total enrolment into the higher institution while the colleges of education enroll only 14% of the total enrolment. Olaoye (2004) observed that only the dregs of post secondary leavers are interested in teacher education. They further confirmed that the fair above average students found in educational institutions are there because they had no admission somewhere else, not because they had education as their first choice. Madueke (1997) said that since National development has a direct link with education and that the teachers translate educational policies, it follows: that education of teachers should be the priority of any country wishing to develop in all branches of human endeavors. The maxim that no Nation can rise above the level of its teachers emphasizes the role of teachers and teacher education programme in national development

2. Problems Associated with Programme of Study during the Training of Student Teachers

Quoting the Education sector Analysis. Kuiper, Thomas Olarisade, Adebayo, Maiyange and Mohammed (2009), noted that complaints about newly appointed teachers, who have low level of numeracy and literacy, skills as well as inadequate knowledge in their chosen area of subject specialization, are common. The low quality of graduates from the teacher training colleges and universities who are joining the teaching profession is a major issue. The assessment tests and subsequent examinations make it clear that students enter colleges and universities with very low level of cognitive skills. Students are caught in a cycle of low achievement. From the foregoing, Kuiper et al (2008) seemed to have a holistic perception of the issue. Other studies/report (Education sector

analysis, 2002, Ajeyalemi 2005, National Teacher Education policy, 2007; Education Sector Support programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN). input visit report, 2000) gives a run-down of the issue as follows.

- a. The teacher training curriculum in the country does not fully acknowledge the new age environment in schools and classroom in term of constructivist learning, learner-centered instruction and integrating technology into processes of teaching and learning. There is no sufficiently strong link between the schools curriculum and the teacher education curriculum.
- b. There is a gap between the curriculum taught to teacher's trainees and the reality that exists in schools. Such realities include dilapidated schools buildings, lack of instructional materials including text-books and writing materials for the pupils, sometimes overcrowded classes, etc. These sometimes overwhelm newly qualified teachers especially when they are required to play multifarious roles to deal with these issues. Essentially teacher preparation programmes are deemed excessively academic and remote from the real challenges confronting classrooms
- c. The emphasis on content delivery, examination and certification over real learning is also serious threat to quality. The current system of teaching and evaluation does not allow creativity innovation and research which are important tools for lifelong learning. Also, education is constructed as an academic exercise that is divorced from the daily- life world of learners and obtaining education qualifications at any level relies heavily and primarily on corrupt practices.
- d. Primary Education Studies (PES) is the only course in the NCE Curriculum that explicitly set out to prepare students for teaching in the primary school in an integrated and focused manner. However, only 10% of enrolment in the colleges of education follows PES, while the remaining 90% offer single or double major courses. This leaves a dearth of qualified teachers at the primary school level.

3 Problems Associated With Institutional Factors.

Ejeh (2009) identified staffing, physical facilities and funding as institutional problems. According to Oji (2011), the problems that saw the end of 6-3-3-4 system of education are still very prominent with the UBE programme. He asserts that the human resource development or recruitment of teacher that would man the UBE programme may encounter some difficulties if urgent remedies are not taken. For example, the Federal Ministry of Education statistics reveals that Nigeria needs 109,000 technical teachers for the effective implementation of National policy on Education at the secondary and technical college levels but only 8,000 were available. This shortfall of the number of teachers will affect the teaching and quality in the UBE programme. According to Anaduaka and Okafor, (2013), the teacher student ratio in UBE scheme is put at 1:40- obviously this is not what obtains in most UBE schools where some classes have up to

70 pupils/student. They said this has continued to be a big challenge to the government considering the cost implications of employing such a large number of teachers as the scheme demand. In an overview of the challenge affecting UBE in Delta state Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) revealed inadequate manpower to handle effectively subject in schools as one of the pressing problems of the UBE programme.

Another prominent challenge in the implementation of the UBE program is the issue of funding. It is evident that the federal government has not spent up to 15% of its total budget on education in the last 14 years of uninterrupted democracy. The highest allocation so far was in 2008 when it allocated 13%. This pattern of allocation which is below the UNESCO threshold that is 26% of the total budget is certainly affecting the implementation of government policy on education and in particular the UBE since its inception (Popoola, Bello & Atanda, 2009). The position has been well captured by Dike (2001) & Igbuzor (2006) as cited by Popoola, Bello & Atanda when they observed that the government is in the habit of allocating less money to the education sector and consequently limits the implementation of the programme. It is also instructive to note that the phenomenon of corruption is compounding the problems of shortage of fund in the implementation of the UBE programme. Popoola Bello and Atanda (2009), further said even where limited funds are allocated, the little that is made available is usually embezzled by corrupt Nigerian officials working in SUBEB offices across the country. Despite bloated annual budget for funding the UBE programme including massive aids from local and international communities for successful implementation of the programme, there are indications that several schools are still plagued with inadequate physical facilities for effective implementation of UBE. Ngada (2001) identified lecture halls, classroom, laboratories, hostels, staff, quarters, generating plants, office equipment as being inadequate in most teacher producing institutions.

Conclusion

This study has traced the history of universal education in Nigeria, beginning with UPE in 1976 to 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1982 and UBE in 1999. The universal education under whatever guise has been bedeviled by many challenges. One of the challenges which are the subject of this discussion is the dearth of qualified teachers to implement the universal education programme. Teacher Training Institutions which are supposed to be breeding ground for qualified teachers are encumbered by three major factors which are the process of selecting teacher education candidates, the programme of study during the training of student teachers and institutional factors which include staffing, physical facilities and funding. Unless drastic measures are taken to curb the challenges of teacher training institutions, the implementation of UBE will continue to be a mirage.

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government should improve the funding of the educational sector which is presently about 13%, far below the UNESCO threshold. There is also the need for proper monitoring of fund released to the educational sector to curtail

embezzlement. Fund for physical facilities and infrastructure should be adequately provided

2. Enrolment into teacher education programme need to be reviewed. Teacher education programme is not supposed to admit students that are less qualified as it is the case today. There should be a deliberate effort to make the teaching profession lucrative and attractive so that more candidates will be willing to enroll.

3. Teachers should be well compensated for their tireless services even though better pay does not necessarily mean performance pay. Teachers should be given high basic salary and allowances as incentive to join the profession. Teaching should be made to compete with other professionals such as oil workers, health workers and other lucrative professions.

4. Teachers who perform well either through improved student performance, improved students behavior or through other methods of professional assessment should be given a bonus for their stellar performances

5. There should be more effort to train qualified teachers. Colleges of Educations and Faculties of Education in the universities should wake up to their responsibilities in giving adequate and qualitative training to prospective teachers as well as retraining existing teachers.

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