

Constrains of Implementing Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Ogun State

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Abstract

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was a policy developed in Nigeria by the federal government of Nigeria in line with the millennium goal adopted to ensure that illiteracy is eradicated in Nigeria or reduced to the barest minimum. Ogun State joined other states of the nation in 2005 and since then a lot has been done towards achieving this goal. However, it has been observed that not much success has been recorded regarding UBE in Ogun State, Nigeria. This paper looks at the challenges the state government has faced so far in the cost of making this policy effective, it also seeks to look at the implementation of this policy in Ogun State, owing to the fact that the state is depressed economically. This paper takes a theoretical approach by reviewing the necessary variables. The paper concludes that in Ogun State, UBE is yet to put in place the requirements needed to enhance the practice outlined by UNICEF. We therefore recommend that Ogun State government should adopt the steps enlisted by UBE in other to enhance the effectiveness of the policy to achieve the millennium goals of 2020. The paper also recommends practical steps like proper education of the people who are the beneficiary of the policy, etc. The state government can take to further ensure that the target of this policy is achieved to the benefit of the citizens of Ogun State.

Keywords: *Universal basic education, Millennium development goal, Inadequate funds, Scheme.*

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Background to the Study

The federal government of Nigeria launched an educational policy in line with the millennium development goal in September 1999 under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The target of the policy was to ensure that every child in Nigeria acquires at least 9 years of basic education. The main reason for launching this policy was because the federal government wanted learning experience to touch lives of the Nigerian child; hence the establishment of this scheme was necessitated.

The philosophy of Nigerian education according to the National Policy on Education, 2004 edition emphasized the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen; the full integration of the individual into the community; and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

The Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) according to Omotere (2011) adopted by world nations in 2000 proposed that, by 2015, children of educable age should have free, affordable and accessible education. The item is a response to the world conference of Education for All (EFA) held in Jomitten, Thailand from 5th to 9th March, 1990, which was the major trigger for the birth of Universal Basic Education (UBE). The conference, which was well attended, and Nigeria was also a signatory (participant) came out with a blue print document entitled: "World Declaration on Education for All" and framework of actions to meet basic learning needs.

The UBE policy of education was passed into law in Ogun State in 2005 by the federal government of Nigeria. The scheme was initially launched in the country in 1999 and passed into law in 2004; this was done after the Federal Government has launched a similar policy in Nigeria in 2004. This was necessitated by the need to meet up with the millennium development goal. Because of the socioeconomic challenges in Nigeria, the target of the UBE programme has not really been achieved. This paper evaluated how this policy could be achieved in a depressed economy of Ogun State.

The UBE Scheme has been confronted with several challenges because structures were hurriedly put in place, teachers were trained haphazardly according to Omotere (2011) and there was an inadequate funding of the primary education sector. This brought about declining enrolment in public primary schools. Teachers to pupil's ratio were high and at the long run, education was meant only for the wealthy children contrary to all the children as earlier proposed. However, the management of primary education system by Nigerians has experienced serious problems. The re-introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched nationwide in 1999 experienced problems of acute shortage of classroom spaces, shortage of teachers and equipment among other problems. This has indicated that primary school education is under-funded; most of the primary sections controlled and financed by the government are in shambles. This may not be unconnected with the neglect and lack of maintenance as a result of poor economic depression.

Nigeria economy experienced recession before the year 2015 when the present administration came into office. The budget for basic education in Ogun State during this period of economic down turn was definitely affected as the State draws its resources mainly from the national budget. Ajayi and Adeyemi (2011) noted that the aspects of the policy which is capital intensive require the government to provide adequately for basic education in the area of organization, funding, staff development, facilities, among others. They noted that from the commencement of the scheme in 1999/2000 till date, Ogun State, joined forces with the Federal government in the area of facility provision, through counter-part funding to provide some facilities to schools in the State, especially in the Primary level. These facilities include textbooks in the core subjects' areas- Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Primary Science, blocks of classrooms, furniture, laboratories/library, teachers, but these facilities were not enough. In some local governments, the provisions were almost not available. There was no direct access to basic education. This put at risk the learning environment which ultimately encouraged illiteracy as noted by Abdulgafar and Inwelegbu (2002). Therefore, this study evaluated the implementation of UBE in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Universal Basic Education programme is not a new concept in the Nigerian education system. The Universal Basic Education can be regarded as an offshoot of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme, which was launched in the country in 1976. This scheme was abandoned mid-way (Aluede, 2006). The fact that the scheme, UPE had something to offer perhaps led to the re-introduction of the programme in another name and concept known as Universal Basic Education in 1999.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a policy reform measure of the Federal Government of Nigeria, aimed at rectifying distortions in the basic education, UBE is conceived to embrace formal education up to age 15, as well as adult and non-formal education including education of the marginalized groups within the Nigerian society. The National Policy on Education, 2004 section 3 defines basic education as a type of education comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school. The policy stipulates that the education shall be free and compulsory. This scheme shall include adult and non-formal educational programmes at primary and junior secondary school levels for both adults and out-of school youths. The UBE has three main components-universal, basic and education. Universal here means the programme is for everyone irrespective of tribe, culture or race and class (Aluede, 2006; Eddy and Akpan, 2009). The term basic depicts that which is a fundamental or essential thing that must be given or had. It is on this factor that every other thing rests on. Without it, nothing may be achieved. It is the root for acquisition of any knowledge (Eddy and Akpan, 2009). 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 Universal Basic Education's mission is to serve as a prime energizer of national movement for actualization of the nation's UBE's vision, working in concert with all

stakeholders. This will mobilize the nation's creative energies to ensure that education for all becomes the responsibilities of all (UBEC Annual Report). The Universal Basic Education Commission in its annual report in 2005 listed the objectives of the Universal Basic Education to include: ensuring unfettered access to 9 years of formal basic education, the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age, reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency and ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives and indeed the UBE's vision and mission of the Scheme, an Act tagged UBE Act was enacted on the 26th May, 2004. It was titled Act to provide for compulsory, free, universal Basic Education and other related matters. Following the enactment of the Act, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was established. The UBE Act of 2004 provided three sources of funding for the implementation of the UBE, which are Federal Government Grant of not less than 2% of its consolidated revenue fund; funds or contributions in the form of federal guaranteed credits and local or international donor grants. Although, this Act covers both the State and the Local Governments, the state government can only benefit from the Federal Government block grant meant for the implementation of the UBE if it can contribute at least 50 percent of the total cost of the project. This is to ensure the state's commitment towards the UBE project enjoys a wide coverage, the Act provides sanctions for parents who fail to send their children and wards to school. Also in order to ensure that poverty is not a hindrance to schooling, the project provides free textbooks in core subjects as well as abolishes tuition at the primary school and at the junior secondary school levels. The enactment of the UBE Act has a legal implication, which makes it compulsory for provision of universal, free and compulsory 6 years of primary education and the first 3 years of secondary education.

From the various objectives of the UBE stated above, the child should have a continuous, uninterrupted stretch of education for 9 years from primary school to the 3rd year of the junior secondary school. Apart from this, the UBE scheme plans catering for the adults who have been out of school before they acquired the basic skills needed for lifelong learning in form of non-formal programmes. So, the UBE programme is planned in such a way that it shall provide non-formal skills and training for youths who have not had the benefit of formal education (Dare *et al.*, 2008). The new scheme has therefore, changed the education system from 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-4. It is expected that there shall be a smooth transition from the primary school (6 years) to the junior secondary school (3 years). This also translates to no entrance examination into the junior secondary school. It is also expected that junior secondary schools shall be an autonomous body; not having much to do with the senior secondary school. In order to achieve this, all states of the federation have given the junior schools their autonomy. Thus, the junior secondary schools operate as separate bodies, having their own principals, vice-principals and members of teaching and non-teaching staff.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the UBE programme in Nigeria has its own unique features. First and foremost, the scheme makes it compulsory for every government in Nigeria to provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. Secondly, it enforces all parents to ensure that their children or wards attend and complete their primary education and junior secondary school as stated in section 2 of the Act, which provides some fines for any breach of the Act.

The Universal Basic Education Policy in Ogun State

Before the introduction of UBE education policy, other similar policies had existed. The Universal Primary Education UPE is one that made a great impact in Nigeria in the mid 70s. This was launched in 1976. This policy was domiciled in the Western and Eastern Nigeria. The target of this policy was to meet the educational need of the citizens. Some years down the line, it was observed according to Fafunwa (1986) as quoted by Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) that the objectives were not realized. The failure of the programme they noted was attributed to insufficient fund, poor planning and implementation of the policies.

Again, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was launched in 1982, this time, covering all the states of the federation. This system of education expects a child to spend 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary school, another 3 years in senior secondary school and the last 4 years in tertiary institution. This system which was expected to eradicate illiteracy also failed to accomplish its set objectives. This reason according to Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) is because, the policies were flagged off without proper implementation of reliable assessment of the need of the country, lack of proper funding and lack of proper evaluation and monitoring.

As a result of funding, the earlier facilities put in place became deplorable, the rate of school dropout began to increase, poverty, crimes and other vices took over the nation. A close evaluation of the previous education policies introduced by the federal government showed reasons why the programme could not be sustained. The programmes were found to produce graduates who were not properly trained to meet the need of the society, the content of the curriculum were narrow, thus, giving rise to more agitation to new policies that could address these inadequacies found in the education policy in use. The UBE programme was launched to provide solutions to the problems the education system was facing in the country.

Following the declaration of the federal government in 2004 for universal Basic Education, Ogun State swung into action in 2005 by bringing the policy to every nook and cranny of the state. The target of Universal Basic Education (UBE) was that at the end of 9 (nine) years of continuous education, every child should have acquired appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable in order to contribute his/her quota to national development. The UBE act of 2004 as quoted from Etuk, Ering, and Ajake, (2012) outlined the targets of the policy as follows:

1. Early child care development and education (ECCDE)
2. Six years of primary Education
3. Three years of junior secondary education.
4. Ensuring that school-age children are in school.
5. 100% transition to JSS at the end of six years of primary education.
6. Completers of Basic Education to possess literacy, numeracy and basic life skills, as well as ethical moral and civic values.
7. All teachers in Basic Education institutions to possess the Nigerian Certificate of Education.
8. Review of basic education curriculum to conform to the reform agenda.
9. Achievement of 100% awareness on HIV/ AIDS in schools.
10. Establishment of an effective institutional framework for monitoring learning and teaching.
11. Active involvement in and participation and eventual ownership of schools by local communities

The tenets of the policy were as follows;

- a. Provision of free and compulsory basic education irrespective of their gender, age, religious background, language and financial position. The programme was to take care of adult literacy programme.
- b. The programme was to remove distortions and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and to reinforce the implementation of National Policy of education.

The UBE programme had numerous challenges militating against the effective performance; hence, the success of the programme is hampered. Despite the fact that the state flagged off this programme in 2004, the question is, has Ogun State been able to meet the educational policy set over a decade ago? What are the factors militating against the success of the policy in Ogun state? The paper hopes to list the challenges against the fulfilment of the policy and suggest ways forward. The following challenges have affected the rate of success recorded in this programme. (Etuk, Ering, and Ajake, 2012)

a. Lack of Proper Data for Planning

The state does not have accurate data for planning. The national population census which was supposed to produce accurate statistic was not very effective. Policies taken with inaccurate data may not give good implementation of the policy.

b. Inadequate Fund

The policy and implementation document released in 2000 indicated that 5 million dollars was budgeted for renovation of school structures and to build new ones where the old structures are debilitated however, the money has not been disbursed. Also, some local governments where there are structures, there is no libraries, no laboratories and other support facilities.

c. Lack of Competent Teachers

The policy requires a ratio of 40/1, forty pupils to one teacher is recommended for this policy to be effective. Some of the schools in some rural areas of Ogun State have as high as 70 pupils to one teacher, making difficult for the teacher to have rapport with every pupil in the class; this does not help adequate learning.

d. Poor Monitoring and Evaluation

When the programme is adequately monitored, it will check and balance for the programme. It will be able to evaluate the policies and ascertain whether this has properly been carried, it will ascertain whether the programme has achieved the purpose it set out to achieve, it will determine factors that has hindered the achievement of the set goals, and determine the way forward. If monitoring is lacking, the programme is bound to fail.

e. Poor Implementation of the UBE Policy

The teachers are an indispensable factor in the achievement of the educational goals. The curriculum process and execution can only be effective if teachers are equipped with the skills needed to implement the curriculum.

f. Poor Motivation to Teachers

In the last eight months, the current governor of the Ogun State has not paid the teachers, hence the teaching profession and teachers are relegated to the background. This has caused the moral of the teachers to be low. Because their salaries are not paid regularly, the productivity is usually low.

g. Lack of Proper Public Enlightenment

There are parts to be played by stakeholders in education industries and parents alike to ensure this policy is effective. Parents for instance are not supposed to keep their children out of school especially during school hours. This is an offence that is punishable by law.

h. Dearth of Properly Trained Administrators and Inspectors for the UBE programme

The death of properly trained and certified school administrators has compounded the problems of UBE not only in Ogun State but the entire country Nigeria. Since its inception in 2006, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has organized series of workshops and seminars for the classroom teachers nation-wide, in order to update their pedagogical skills. Curiously, however, not much, if any at all, has been done in the areas of "school management, social mobilization, and in the overall decision making..." as enunciated in the Implementation Guidelines for the UBE, (Ejiogu, Onyene and Bello, 2007)

**The Table reflects the Enrolment statistics of Public Schools in Ogun state, Nigeria.
Enrolment Statistics**

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Primary	292,324	387,912	483,500	579,088	674,676	770,264
Secondary	406,890	506,002	605,114	704,226	803,338	902,450

Source: Nigerian Education Fact Sheet U.S embassy in Nigeria Retrieved from <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/nigeria/487468/pdfs/JanuaryEducationFactSheet.pdf>

This is a reflection of the fact that the UBE Scheme has not been accessed by all stake holders in the state. Going by the population of Ogun state as published by Nigeria Data Portal 2006, the population of Ogun state is put at 3,728,098. This is a clear indication from this enrolment that much work needs to be done by the state government to ensure that the scheme achieve the target set for it. The State can take the following steps to ensure that the policy is properly implemented to ensure that all the benefit of the programme is derived by the citizens of the state despite the economic distress in the state.

Suggestions for Improvement

Though there are challenges in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education scheme, they are not insurmountable. The solution lies with both the government and the people. Being a people oriented programme, the people should be properly educated about the scheme by emphasizing educational guidance for the parents. In particular, the parents need to be educated on the need to give their children the basic education for a lifelong education. The government should have the political will to put into effect the Act that stipulates penalties for parents who refuse to send their children or wards to school. Stemming from this, the government, especially the state and local governments should put in place an educational police force who would go out to arrest children of school age who are not in school during school hours. Any child arrested should have his/her parents charged before the court for contravening section 2 (2) of the UBE Act. The educational police force must visit the major roads in the cities, mechanic villages, artisan workshops to fish out any child learning a trade but less than 16 years of age. These children should be questioned and their parents be invited for interrogation. It is assumed that if education police are put in place at the state and local government levels, the dropout rate shall be reduced to the minimum, if not totally eradicated. To do this, the government should popularize this section of the UBE Act through, the nation's media, especially the radio. The enjoyment of government services by parents such as medical services should be made contingent upon the production of a certificate that they have their children in school. In addition, the Homegrown School Feeding Programme, a United Nation project emanating from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of Education for all in the year 2015, being currently practiced in some states, should be extended to other states of the federation in order to further boost the primary school enrolment.

The issue of funding should be looked into properly. The situation whereby every government claims to be spending a lion share of its budget whereas the reverse is the case should be addressed. Whatever allocation is given, to education the overhead cost, i.e., salaries and allowances should not be added to the allocation, Salaries should be treated as a separate component. It is only when this is done that the actual amount allocated to education shall be meaningful. The government expenditure should be closely monitored to prevent embezzlement by the people charged with responsibility of managing the scheme. With adequate funding, the provision of more schools (primary and secondary) should be of concern to the government. The National Policy on education recommends that the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1: 40 at the secondary school level while that of primary school shall be 1 :35 (section 19 g). This ratio has not been met in the urban areas. The present government (state and local) should put up more schools to achieve the stipulated ratio in order to avoid overcrowding, which is inimical to effective teaching and learning. The junior secondary schools should be planned as neighbourhood schools as stated in the National Policy on Education to relieve students from trekking long distance before getting to school.

Since the provision of more schools automatically translates to provision of more quality teachers, the government should make provision and prepare for training of qualified teachers in Nigeria. In this regard, the colleges of education as well as faculties of education in the universities should wake up to their responsibilities in giving adequate and qualitative training to the prospective teachers. As much as there is need to train a lot of teachers to fill the classrooms, quality must be the watchword. Hence, there is also the need to retrain the existing teachers to reshape their orientation towards qualitative education in Nigeria. Teachers should also be positively motivated to ensure dedication from them. That is the conditions of service for teachers should be improved to keep them on the job.

Conclusion

This study has examined the evolution of universalization of education since 1955 and other attempts of various governments in Nigeria to provide basic education for her citizens in the context of the challenges facing the Universal Basic Education scheme in particular. Some of the challenges mentioned in this study are inadequate funding; poor planning due to incomplete data; the inability of the scheme to reduce the rate of drop outs; inadequate facilities in form of physical structures, instructional materials and even quality teachers and corruption. These challenges were found to be militating against the objectives of the UBE programme. In view of these challenges, the study has suggested certain measures that the country can put in place to help achieve the desired goals of the scheme. The study therefore, suggests intensive campaign among parents to enlighten them about the values of education; to put into effect the relevant UBE Act; to ensure that fund should provided on the basis of needs and not what the government can afford as it is presently the case and adequate training of teachers to man the schools under the UBE programme.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the Ogun State Ministries of Education, as the evaluation body for the UBE scheme in the state cannot afford to go to sleep because the responsibility for evaluation and monitoring of the programme lie mainly on their shoulder. Therefore, other Ministries in collaboration with the State Universal Basic Education boards must be empowered to carry out their responsibilities. Schools should be visited regularly, not to witch hunt, but to ensure that the teachers are performing as expected of them. The visits should not be sporadic so as to put the teachers and the principals on the alert. The student's records, too, should be evaluated by the ministry. The Ministry's unit on adult and non-formal education must ensure that the various programmes on adult and non-formal education are properly structured and monitored. These programmes should be taken as a very important aspect of the scheme. The Universal Basic Education commission's impact must be felt at the state and local government levels. The state Universal Basic Education boards at the state level must also visit schools to ascertain that the resources sent to schools are properly handled.

Finally, the Nigerian government should endeavour to conduct a national census that will be devoid of political undertone. Proper and accurate data shall enable proper and accurate projection, which will help the education planners and government plan ahead. This will not bring embarrassment such as not having enough teachers, resources for both teachers and students. To get accurate population data, the government should start to think about emphasizing vital registration system by strengthening the present ad hoc vital registration scheme.

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