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# An Appraisal of the Universal basic Education in Nigeria

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*Abstract-* The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme could not have been introduced at a better time than now that the nation is in dire need of all round National Development. The major objective of the UBE programme is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6—15 years. However, for the Universal Basic Education programme to be truly free and universal, efforts must be made to check those factors that are known to have hindered the success of such programmes in the past. This paper specifically considered the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) so far-.its success and problems. Relevant recommendations are therefore proffered.

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# An Appraisal of the Universal basic Education in Nigeria

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*Abstract-* The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme could not have been introduced at a better time than now that the nation is in dire need of all round National Development. The major objective of the UBE programme is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6—15 years. However, for the Universal Basic Education programme to be truly free and universal, efforts must be made to check those factors that are known to have hindered the success of such programmes in the past. This paper specifically considered the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) so far-.its success and problems. Relevant recommendations are therefore proffered.

## I. Introduction

Education is one of the vital instructions in development. According to the National Policy on Education (1998) "Education in Nigeria is an instrument "per excellence' for effecting national development Certainly, what Nigeria needs in this 2Pt century to turn her economy around is not extended primary or elementary education, but a basic education programme that will ensure that every Nigerian youth on graduation is sufficiently equipped with knowledge, skills, and experiences required for initial entry into one occupation in the world of work, whether college bound or not (Anyabolu, 2000).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was however launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo 30th September, 1999. the UBE programme as spelt out in the implementation guidelines, aims at achieving the following specific objectives.

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- 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. –
- Catering: for the learning needs of young person's f r me reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion. Basic education;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethnical, moral and civic value needed for paying.

A review of related literature has revealed that attempts in the past to provide free education whether at the federal or state levels has never been successful due to poor planning and implementation. This view was supported by Nwagwu (2000) who sees poor planning as one of the problems responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of the former UPE programme. They posited that the planners of the programme were unable to project fairly accurate number of children that would gain from the scheme.

Adequate efforts therefore, should be made to counter all the factors which led to the unsuccessful implementation of similar programmes in the past. This paper examines some issues associated with free education programme and proffers. solution for the effective implementation of UBE programme.

The existing educational programmes in Nigeria failed to meet the educational needs and aspirations of the populace. This led to the proposal of the universal basic education (UBE) by the Nigerian government. This was a welcomed idea to the Nigerian populace. who were. unhappy that the 6-3-3-4 system which replaced the 6- 5-2-3 system and the earlier introduced universal primary education programmes. (UPE), (of the past regimes) was no better than the earlier introduced programmes.

## II. The Meaning of UBE

Universal Basic Education is the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. It has three main components— Universal, Basic and Education.

Universal connotes a programme that is meant for all facets of the society— the rich; poor, the physically fit and the disabled, the brilliant fit, the dull the regular students and the dropouts including every other individual that is ready to acquire knowledge. The term "basic" relates to the base, take off point, fundamental essential, spring board, bottom line, they required and of course expected it therefore shows that basic education is the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge. Without basic education, higher education cannot be acquired. It therefore Implies that this basic education is mandatory for all citizens It is that type of

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

The idea of "Education" connotes transmission of knowledge from general to generation. In the UBB programme, it is expected that theoretical and practical knowledge transmitted to learners in its simplistic form. This involves starting from the scratch and being able to carry the leaner along This education is the "aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours, which are of positive value to the society in which he lives" Fafunwa, 1974). .

## III. Criteria of UBE

UBE by definition must provide minimum education Citizen should have easy access to it and it should be free. In the implementation guideline for UBE programme there is a UBE 'commission which runs the affairs of the UBE. They also set up minimum standards of primary, junior secondary and adult literacy throughout Nigeria It is expected that stiff penalties should be imposed on persons Societies or institutions that prevent children adolescents and youths from benefiting from UBE (Adewole, 2000) UBE is also expected to provide basic education which is expected to be terminal. Such education (UBE) is not meant for school age children alone it is also designed to take care of the educational needs of young peoples and adults who have not had the opportunity to receive adequate schooling Thus the UBE programme will include nomadic education, education of migrant fisherman, school drop outs, out of school children and adult education.

## IV. The Main Objectives of the UBE Programme

According to the implementation guideline released by the Federal Ministry of Education in February 2000, the programme aims at achieving the following objectives

1. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. Provide free, compulsory, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age group.
3. Reduce drastically, drop outrage from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
4. Cater for drop outs and out of school children/adolescent through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
5. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethnical moral and civic values needed for laying the foundation for life long learning.

This programme is expected to be a continuation of the UPE programme which was abandoned in 1976 UBE programme was launched by President Obasanjo 30th September 1999 in order to realize the earlier stated objectives.

## V. The Need for Effective Monitoring and Assessment of UBE Programme

For the URE programme to be successful there must be quality assurance monitoring and evaluation carried out on a regular basis in order to sustain and improve quality The research and planning units of the ministries of education should be well equipped to meet the challenges of the UBE programme Close and continuous monitoring of the programme will reveal whether the stated objectives of the programme has been achieved This will help to identify the causes of failure on time before it gets out of hand Personnel from Planning Research and Statistics units of the ministries of education and other implementation agencies at all tiers of government should be involved According to Dadughun (2004) the monitoring and evaluation team should include,

1. The ministries of education
2. The Joint consultative Committee
3. The National Council an Education (NCE)
4. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)
5. The Universal Basic Education Commission CUBE)
6. The International Centre For Educational Evaluation (ICCEE)
7. The National Examination Council (NECO)
8. The West African Examination Council (WAEC)

From the aforementioned, it can be observed that the monitoring teams ate quite numerous With careful planning management and programming the Educational planners can draw up a monitoring programme to accommodate these monitoring bodies it will go a long way to relieve the monitoring groups from stress There will be division of labour and the monitoring will be more thorough We all know that "two eyes are better than one" Monitoring and evaluation wall also ensure that

1. There is proper utilization of funds and accountability
2. The infrastructures and learning materials are adequate
3. Effective teaching and learning takes place
4. The curricular content is adequate
5. The reaching methods used are suitable



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6. Qualified teachers are used in the programme
7. Admission criteria are strictly adhered to
8. Appropriate instructional materials are used

## VI. Factors that may Lead to the Failure of UBE Programme

Various reasons have been envisaged which are likely to lead to the failure of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme From the view expressed by Ezeocha (1990) Ukeje, et al (1992) some of the factors which may lead to the failure of the UBE include:

*a) Poor Planning*

According to Adamaechi and Romaine (2000) proper planning has been found to be the root of the success of every good educational policy or programme Without proper planning, the best education programme is bound to fail The UPE programme of the past suffered from lack of planning This view is in consonance with Nwagwu (2000) who observed that poor planning was one of the problems responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of the former UPE programmes.

*b) Inadequate Funding*

Funding is central to the overall development of education in general and technical education in particular According to Olaitan (1996), no educational programme can be success M in the face of inadequate funding Educational funding in Nigeria has been dwindling in recent times.

*Tables 1 :* 1986 – 1995 Federal Government Annual Budget Allocation to

| Year | Overall Nation's Budget | Educational Budget (N billion) | % of Educational Overall Budgets. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1986 | 15.6 | 0.65 | 4 |
| 1987 | 17.9 | 0.34 | 2 |
| 1988 | 24.4 | 0.53 | 2 |
| 1989 | 30.1 | 1.29 | 4 |
| 1990 | 39.8 | 1.46 | 4 |
| 1991 | 38.7 | 0.76 | 2 |
| 1992 | 27.6 | 2.40 | 9 |
| 1993 | 112.1 | 800 | 7 |
| 1994 | 110.2 | 77 | 7 |
| 1995 | 98.2 | 12.7 | 13 |
| Total | 475.9 | 35.83 | 7 |

*Source: Okoh S E N (2002). As extracted from various ministerial Budget speeches between 1986 — 1995.*

The table I above represents a ten year recurrent and capital estimate on the educational sector between 1986 and 1995. The yearly average allocation to the educational sector had even declined to about 7% as shown in Table I This tends to confirm the UNESCO (1969) Paris plan which observed that many low-income countries would be unable to give universal free education at all levels owing to the unrestricted population upsurge in those countries. According to Okoh (2002), the inability of the federal government to effectively sustain educational funding demonstrates lack of adequate government planning.

*c) Lack of Qualified Teachers*

According to Obayan (2002) no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers. In his own contribution Fafunwa (1976) opined that "no significance change In education can take place in any country unless its teaching staff were well trained and retrained".

The teacher plays a central role in the actualization of educational goals as well as ensuring the survival of the entire educational system In the previous free education schemes, teachers were in very short supply leading to the employment if mediocres, 'market women" and half baked individuals (Adamaechi and Romaine, 2000) This view was enforced by Ezeocha (1990) who noted that the crash programme of the UPE attracted the wrong calibers of people into teaching profession Nevertheless, inspite of such crash programmes and the subsequent recruitment of mediocres and sub-standard teachers, the teachers were still grossly adequate.



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*d) Poor Implementation*

Previous UPE schemes as welt as many other educational policies in Nigeria suffered from the problem of poor or ineffective implementation In most cases the policies and programmes were sound in terms of targets to be reached and means of reaching those targets But as the implementation is being carried out, there will a breakdown somewhere along the line Cox (1996) and Mutiu (1994) have argued that the main problem confronting education in the less developed countries as the inability to coordinate and effectively manage available resources.

*e) Population Explosion (Increase in Enrolment)*

The size of the class will definitely affect the implementation of UBE programme. Ohuche' and Ali (1989) observed that if the class is too large less attention will be paid to each pupil. Nowadays, there is population explosion in our primary schools. In his own contribution, Okoh (2000) observed that increase in class size also affects the effective implementation of vocational programmes the primary level.

*Tables 2 :* Primary School Enrolments in Nzeria (1960 — 1990)

| Year | Enrolment/Population |
|---|---|
| 1960 | 2,912,6000 |
| 1966 | 3,026,000 |
| 1970 | 3,515,800 |
| 1973 | 4,746,800 |
| 1976 | 8,260,200 |
| 1977 | 9,849,000 |
| 1978 | 11,474,900 |
| 1980 | 12,749,400 |
| 1985 | 17,127,400 |
| 1990 | 21,632,500 |

*Source: Ohuche and Ali (1989) cited in Okoh (2000).*

Table II above explains the unprecedented increase in primary School enrolment from 1960— 1990 In addition to class management problems that will be created by increase in enrolment there are also problems like shortages of class rooms teaching staff teaching materials, and serious financial constraints.

## VII. Content of the Universal basic Education (UBE) Programme

The UBE programme is intended to be universally free and compulsory. These terms imply that appropriate types of opportunities will be provided for the basic education of every Nigerian child of school-going age (Obayan, 2000).

The UBE programme has enormous implications for vanous spheres of the nation, from budgetary expenditure to other developmental programmes This programme must fully justify the opportunity cost that goes with its implementation. The objectives of the UBE according to Obayan (2000) are far reaching and they.

Include:

1. Pre-primary education sector
2. Handicapped children sector
3. Primary education sector
4. Junior secondary education sector
5. Senior secondary education sector
6. Technical education sector
7. Teacher education sector
8. University education sector and
9. Adult and continuing education sector

The content of the programme is indeed even much more .expensive as it covers all dimensions of the various sectors above. According to Obayan. (2000) its scope cover the provision of;

- Programme/initiatives for early childhood, care and socialization
- Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy
- Out of school and non-formal programmes for updating knowledge and skills
- Special programmes for nomadic
- The formal school system from the primary to junior secondary school, and among others.

The content is a functional set of approaches geared towards effective organization and implementation of the programme. which include;

1. Public Enlightenment and social mobilization for full community involvement
2. Data collection and Analysis . . .
3. Planning, monitoring, evaluation
4. Teachers recruitment education, training, retraining, motivation
5. Infrastructural facilities
6. Enriched curriculum
7. Text books and instructional Materials
8. Improve funding: .
9. Management of the entire process.
10. Source: E.M.E. (2000).

These content areas of the UBE programme are far reaching and all important to the successful organization of the programme. Therefore the basic school subjects necessary for instruction, the scope as outlined above and the highlighted organizational. areas make up the full content of the U.BE programme.



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## VIII. Strategies for Effective Implementation of the UBE. Programme

In order to successfully run the UBE programme and to prevent its getting extinct like other educational programmes adequate care has to be taken to effectively guard, the programme. The following strategies can be 'adopted far effective implementation of the UBE programme.

*a) Instructional Supervision*

Ogumu (2000) supervision as the art of overseeing the instructional activities of teachers and other educational workers in a school system to ensure that they conform to generally accepted principles and practice education. Instructional supervision is very necessary for sustainable programme.

*b) Monitoring of Educational Expenditure and Checking the Incidence of Fraud*

The UPE programme was characterized by reckless spending, wastage an fraud One of the major reasons for establishing an inspectorate service is to monitor the expenditure of public fund Monitoring and evaluation is very important in order to check the quality of delivery of the whole UBE programme.

*c) Adequate Planning and Projection*

The UBE programme should be properly planned and adequate projector should be made in terms of expected enrolment required teachers, infrastructure needs and equipment The UPE programme failed because of poor or improper planning At a stage the enrolment increased far beyond the capacity of the school and teachers. Appropriate measures should be taken to check such occurrence the UBE programme If planning does not meet up the expectations manpower and finance will be inadequate.

*d) Funding*

The UBE programme should be properly funded The funds so provide should be properly utilized for sustaining the programme Accurate projections and effective cost analysis should be earned out to avoid under-funding The expenditure should be properly monitored to avoid wastage of scarce resources an embezzlement.

*e) Implementation of the Programme*

Everybody should be involved in the implementation stage. Planners should not be isolated from those who will implement the programme (Odo, 2000).

*f) School Administrators*

School Administrators should be ready to thoroughly supervise the teacher for effective delivery of the educational content. The school administrator plays vital role of final implementation if all other indicators of success are in place but at the end of the day students are not properly taught. The whole process will be a waste of time as it is bound m fail. The school head in a free education system should not only supervise the teacher, but also see to the even and fair distribution of books, pencils, chairs and other materials made available to the children by the government. He should be able to manage the funds provided and use It. for the procurement of goods meant for the programme. The school administrator should resist the temptation to embezzle UBE fund.

*g) Training and Retraining of Teachers*

We are living in changing world and the teachers meant for the UBE programme need to keep pace with fast technological changes. To effectively achieve this, the teachers need to be trained and retrained regularly so that their content, method and instructional materials may not turn obsolete.

According to Odo (2000), "at present, some non-professionals are being specially employed for the purpose of the UBE scheme with the hope that their quick orientation/training will be given to them after which they will serve as teachers under the scheme". The government should quickly train those teachers to make them professionally fit to participate in the UBE programme. Also during the planning funds should be set aside for regular training and retraining of teachers.

*h) Free Deduction Always Results in Increase in Enrolment*

The increase demand on manpower (teaching and man teaching staff), textbooks. exercise books for pupils and teachers, buildings, classroom, libraries, laboratories, examination halls. etc. should he adequately accommodated in the planning stage (Adamaechi 2000 and Romaine).

*i) Coordination of The Various Levels of The Programme*

The various levels of the programme should be properly supervised and coordinated. There should be a link and continuity in the education programme curriculum planners are therefore challenged to come up with a regular programme review which will reflect the societal needs thereby linking the school to the society.

*j) Provision of Incentives for UBE. Graduates*

Provision of incentives for UBE scheme to enable them secure gainful employment, These incentive could be in the form of soft loans, grants etc to encourage the school leavers to start a small school business. The government should also endavour to set up cottage industries which will provide middle level employment for skill and semi skilled workers, such a gesture will encourage UBE students to embark on terminal courses i.e. more students will pull out of school in completion of JSS III and become gratefully employed The UBE programme if properly planned



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implemented, monitored and the products are gainfully employed will be a very sound credible and laudable programme.

## IX. Recommendations

- This study therefore recommends that for effective organization and management of Universal Basic Education (UBE), seminars and workshops should be organized to sensitize teachers, parents and community on the need for the specialist service of counselors in career guidance through Education, personal and social development of the school child to help them benefit positively from the UBE Programme.
- The UBE Programme is an expression of the strong desire of the government to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigerian by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry (Obayan, 2000)
- There has not been records of successful free education programmes in Nigeria Therefore, for the successful implementation of the UBE programme, all hands must be on deck and the strategies/recommendations put forward in this write up must be strictly followed and implemented.
- Adequate fund must be put into the programme The required level of participation from the state government, local government and other agencies in terms of funding must be dearly specified
- The Universal basic education commission therefore, must device a way out combating these ills, otherwise the hope of Nigeria implementing UBE as an instrument for national development will remain a myth.

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