



Constraints to Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education for National Development in Nigeria

Rev. Dr. Aloysius Alo Orogwu

Department of Educational Management Faculty of Education
Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike (AE-FUNAI)
aloysiusorogwu8@gmail.com

Abstract

When the 6-3-3-4 educational system was introduced by the colonial masters, the government set out to ensure that education is free at the preliminary levels of learning and this prompted the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) by the federal government in 1999. In 2004, an act was made to ensure that education at the six years of the Primary level and three years of Junior secondary level were free, available and compulsory for every child. Thus, the UBE scheme was firmly established. The scheme has made a lot of progress so far and has increased the rate of literacy to a great extent. However, there have been problems in this scheme which require immediate attention, they are as follows: inadequate funding, corruption, low educational standard, ignorance, insecurity, religious beliefs etc.

Keywords: Constraints, Implementation of universal basic education,
National development in Nigeria

Introduction

Many agree that education is a purposeful activity aimed at achieving certain goals, which include the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits.

Education has been adopted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) "as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development" (FRN, 1998).

The formulation of the National Policy on Education was premised on this government position among other things. Section 7(5) of the National Policy on Education stipulates that Universal Basic Education, in a variety of forms, depending on needs and possibilities, to be provided for all citizens is one of the various measures to be used by government to implement the policy (FRN, 1998).

Rev. Dr. Aloysius Alo Orogwu

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria did not compromise Universal Basic Education when it states in section 18 that Government policy shall be directed towards ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels as well as eradicating illiteracy.

To this end, government shall as and when practicable provide:

- a. Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
- b. Free secondary education;
- c. Free university education; and
- d. Free adult literacy programmes (FRN, 1999).
- e. Declaration of Education for all citizens by the year 2000, and in compliance with the group of E-9 Nations committed to the total eradication of illiteracy that made the UBE to be launched in Nigeria.

This was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo on September 30, 1999 in Sokoto without a blue print. UBE confers free and compulsory education on all Nigerian children during their first nine years of schooling which covers primary school education and three years of junior secondary school. The UBE objectives include developing in the citizens a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion, (FRN, 2000).

The realization of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme is an educational programme aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. It is in compliance with the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) which was made in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and Beijing clearly in Article 1 that every person - child, Youth on Adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs.

This declaration was reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children also held in 2023, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2030. The World Summit for Children placed a lot of emphasis on raising the levels of female literacy.

In a bid to achieve education goals, the Dakar World Education Forum as held in 2023 as a follow-up meeting to the WCEFA where new sets of goals were set to be attained by the year 2015.

The 2023 Dakar action target and strategy on quality has the following goals:

- a) Providing healthy, well-nourished, and motivated children
- b) Well-motivated and professionally competent teachers
- c) Active learning techniques
- d) A relevant curriculum
- e) Adequate, environmentally, friendly and easily accessible facilities

Constraints to Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education for National...

f) Healthy, safe, and protective learning environments which include:

a) Providing adequate water and sanitation facilities access to health and nutrition services (e.g., micronutrient and vitamin supplements, de-worming, school nutrition, leading to health-related knowledge, attitudes, values, and life skills.

b) counseling policies and codes of conduct (e.g., against harassment and corporal punishment) which enhance the physical, psycho-social, and emotional health of teachers and learners' educational content and practices

g) Adequate evaluation of environments, processes, and outcomes

h) Participatory governance and management

i) Respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures

k) Adequately and equitably resourced educational institutions and programmes

l) A child-friendly school which includes:

a) helping a child to participate in school actively, identifying excluded children to get them enrolled in school and included in learning, promoting and helping to monitor the rights and well-being of ALL children in the community.

b) helping a child to have a full realization of the child's full potential concerned about the "whole" child: health, nutritional status.

c) Promoting good quality teaching and learning processes instruction appropriate to each child's learning needs, abilities, and styles, active, co-operative, democratic, gender-responsive learning

d) Providing structured content and good quality materials and resources

e) Enhancing teacher capacity, morale, commitment, status, and income

f) Promoting quality learning outcomes, defines/helps children learn what they need to learn (e.g., literacy, numeracy, life skills).

g) Ensuring that learning environment is of good quality - healthy, hygienic, and safe

h) Providing life-skills based health education

i) Promoting both the physical and the psycho/socio/emotional health of teachers and learners

j) Helping to defend and protect all children from abuse and harm

k) Providing positive experiences for children

l) Promoting gender equality in enrolment and achievement

m) Eliminating gender stereotypes

n) Guaranteeing girl-friendly facilities, curricula, textbooks, and teaching

Rev. Dr. Aloysius Alo Orogwu

o) Socializing girls and boys in a non-violent environment and encourages respect for each other's rights, dignity, and equality.

It is, therefore in recognition of the role of UBE in national development, and in pursuit of the 1990 declaration that this paper sought to provide answers to the following questions;

(i) What are the constituents of UBE programme for national development?

(ii) What factors inhibit effective implementation of UBE Programme for National Development in Nigeria

(iii) How can the constraints on UBE be redressed?

Constituents of UBE for National Development

The UBE launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo on September 30, 1999 which took off in October 2000, is different from the universal primary education of the Western Nigerian of 1955, Eastern Nigeria of 1957, Federal Government of Nigeria of 1976 and the Unity Party of Nigeria States of 1979.

The difference from the past UPE schemes is that, it offers free and compulsory education to all Nigerian children for their first nine years of schooling, in essence, it covers the first six years of primary school and the three years of the junior secondary school.

The UBE programme sets out to achieve 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 (through improved relevance, quality, and efficiency);
- Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the 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 life-long learning (FRN, 2000:2).

To be able to properly achieve the above aims, more appropriate approaches will have to be developed to improve the state of the following:

a) public enlightenment and social mobilization, for full community involvement;

Constraints to Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education for National...

- b) data collection and analysis;
- c) proper planning, monitoring, evaluation;
- d) adequate teacher recruitment, education, training, retraining, motivation;
- e) providing infrastructural facilities;
- f) enriched curricula, textbooks and instructional materials;
- g) improved funding; and, management of the entire process (FRN, 2000:4).

In addition, a sequential implementation plan that commenced in 2000/2001 academic session was put in place.

Primary one of that academic session were the cohorts. The document believes that during the first nine years of the programme, state and local governments will progressively improve the conditions of teaching and learning in their schools by improving teacher quality, up-dating infrastructural facilities and enhanced availability of instructional materials.

However, it is observable that attempts by government to improve on the conditions of teaching and learning, so that, we can better achieve the goals of UBE has been met with constraints which is the concern of the next section.

Factors that inhibit effective implementation of UBE Programme for National Development in Nigeria

The issues of implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria have given a great concern to researchers and educational administrators.

The following factors have been identified by both administrators and researchers as impediment to the effective implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria.

- (a) Lack of funding of the programme by the government and other agencies.

No educational programme can be effectively implemented without the adequate availability of funds (Ogbonaya 2003). This was supported by Abutu (2015), a major problem facing UBE programme in Nigeria is that government does not mobilize enough funds for the vigorous activities needed for the realization of the programme objectives, and even the ones mobilized is being embezzled through contract falsification.

- (b) According to Yusha'u (2014), the challenge facing UBE implementation is the attitude of some state governments of not accessing their funds for many years now. Most of the state governments are only interested in collecting the federal government's funds without paying their counterparts' funds. Others use the fund to award contract to their political loyalist

- (c) Many of the teachers are incompetent to deliver effective and efficient teaching. This is as a result of unorganized manner in which teachers are recruited in the programme. Some states used the programme to settle their political supporters.

Consequently, many of them could not pass through the recruitment process. Others take up the job without adequate commitment with the notion of “na government work”. Hence, teaching-learning suffer greatly. The presence of teachers who were poorly trained and unmotivated has been apparently one of the main reasons on the failure of this educational scheme (Muftahu and Hazri, 2015).

(d). Lack of infrastructural and instructional materials in schools affects teaching learning. According to Sobechi (2004), some UBE schools lack infrastructural facilities and instructional materials especially in the rural areas; because most school buildings are built with poor structures that look more like farm shades. Such a situation hinders the fulfillment of educational objectives.

(e). Inadequacy of statistical data affects the provision of educational resources such as books, laboratory equipment, audio-visual materials, among others, which in themselves constitute major challenges to the successful implementation of the UBE programme (Abutu, 2008).

(f). Poor supervision and monitoring of the UBE schools in the country is a constraint to UBE implementation. Supervisors no longer do the work of supervision as many compromises supervision for gratification they receive as pay packet and lunch at the expense of intensive supervision of lesson notes, truancy, negligence, etc.

According to Obinaju (2001), educational supervision is concerned with those particular activities and aspects which maintain and promote the effectiveness of teaching and learning in school. It is an action directed towards the implementation of teaching/learning process (Onoyase, 1991).

(g). It has been argued that statutory allocation has been inadequate to meet the needs of the UBE programme (Enouch and Okpede, 2000). Unfortunately, the nongovernmental organizations like business enterprises, Parent Teachers Association, Community Development Commission, among others that would have assisted the government in raising fund for education are not giving encouraging support. Hence, the programme suffers a great set back as the various governments alone cannot cater the teeming needs of education in the country.

(h) Attitudinal Constraint. According to Soyode (2013), many Nigerian workers in public employment have "poor work ethics", that they arrive late to work, leave before closing time. He further pointed out that the wrong attitude to work gives birth to low productivity and equally breeds other ills like corruption.

This behaviour of the Nigerian public worker observed many years ago, holds true today for the public Nigerian teacher. Today, we have more of teacher hawkers, who are not prepared to teach rather, they inflate continuous assessment scores, collect money from students in place of craft and assist them to pass examinations. These actions are attempts to cover up the inadequacies in their teaching and learning process. This attitude of most school teachers would likely hamper the successful implementation of the programme.

Possible solution to the implementation problems of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

Constraints to Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education for National...

- Good Governance.
- Adequate Training of Teachers.
- Proper and Timely Payment of Wages.
- Curriculum Development.
- Investing in Special Education as Ability lies in Disability.
- Enlightenment and Empowerment.
- Increasing Funding of the Education sector.
- Good Governance: Any government that ignores the education sector of its country is a bad government and that is the current government and many governments before it existed. A good government will change the education sector by investing enough money, fighting terrorism against students, improving the conditions of schools and laboratories, recruiting qualified teachers, etc.

A good government will also look into the issue of free education in Nigeria and make education free. Most of the problems in secondary schools in Nigeria stem from poor governance, but if this is addressed, Nigerian education will begin to change for the better.

- Adequate Training of Teachers: Teachers teach, but sometimes they also want to learn some things in order to do well. This will improve the education system in Nigeria as teachers will learn how best to transfer the lives of their students. It will also do well in solving the problem of education in Nigeria.
- Proper and Timely Payment of Wages: Nothing motivates Nigerians to do their jobs better than getting paid for the jobs done. Incentives can be added to encourage more teachers. It will also attract qualified teachers to more schools and stimulate interest in studying to become a teacher.

The reason why many students do not want to become teachers is because the salaries and wages of their teachers are low. If this is rectified, the problem of primary education all over the world in Nigeria will become a thing of the past and the Nigerian education system will improve.

- Curriculum Development: Curriculum development in Nigeria is very important at this time. These old programs take Nigerian students to the past, while their fellow students around the world have already entered the future.
- Investing in Special Education as Ability lies in Disability: Special people should also get the opportunity to benefit from quality education, government and non-governmental organizations should organize programs to help them. This will greatly reduce the number of beggars on the streets of Nigeria.
- Enlightenment and Empowerment: It is almost as if cultural, religious and social measures are required to address the problem of female education in Nigeria. Since this is not possible, the next step is to make people understand the power of women in society. Spread the word that

women are not just children's tools and equally explain the importance of education to girls and women in society, especially in the northern regions. Empower them by sending them to the right schools where they can go through the education system and become better people.

- **Increasing Funding of the Education sector:** The government and the private sector should invest more in infrastructure to improve the education sector. The country's education system is suffering from decades of lack of funding and therefore it is important for the government to create a viable education funding plan. For example, UNESCO recommended that 26% of the country's total budget be allocated to the education sector, but since 1991 the allocation for education has not exceeded 10%. As efforts are intensified to improve the current ratio, it is also important to look at how the current allocation is being managed.
- **Putting an end to Examination Malpractice:** Due to the rise in tuition fees and other factors, students and even their parents are doing everything possible to ensure that they are not held back by failure or weakness in the required subjects. Reorganization and education of teachers, students and parents on the need to avoid mistakes in the exam must be done in schools in the country.
- **Establishment of More Vocational and Technical Centers:** Vocational and technical institutions in Nigeria are few and there are no good and skilled workers in the whole country. More of these institutions need to be set up to cater to the growing population that require educational training.
- **Need for Independent Inspectorate Committees:** It is very important to set up independent inspectorate committees because the current one has stopped working properly. Committees should be established and deployed regularly to monitor school operations.
- **Equal opportunities for all Nigerians:** Applicants should be given equal opportunity to compete for admission, regardless of grades obtained at the institution attended and cultural/ ethical affiliations.
- **Learn with Modern Learning Tools:** Teaching aids like computers, libraries and laboratories should be made available in schools for proper learning.
- **Introduction to Online Registration for National Exams:** A national research group should introduce online registration to reduce this type of exploitation by many school principals and other school heads during National examinations.
- **Education Conferences should Hold Regularly Across the Country:** Those involved in the education sector need to be careful and deliberate in order to find a sustainable and acceptable solution to the declining level of education in all educational sectors especially at the primary and junior secondary levels.

In this modern technology era of computers, smart phones, etc., modern learning is made easier as these innovations speed up the process of sharing knowledge, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Constraints to Effective Implementation of Universal Basic Education for National...

- Review the National Education Policy: The education sector in Nigeria should be restructured and all opportunities should be explored to improve the quality of education. Educational expeditions should be sent to different parts of the world to understand their educational systems for comparison and to learn new methods and principles for solving the problem.
- Teachers Welfare Program should be Up-dated: It is well known that money and a decent work environment are the main motivators for employees. Therefore, the salary of teachers should be paid on time and the learning environment up graded for proper teaching and learning to take place.
- Ability and communication skills in the language of instruction should be given special attention.
 - Providing commentary in the native language (sometimes) can be a rewarding decision.

Conclusion.

The study examined the Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria and the extent of its implementation. The study discovered that UBE programme took off in Nigeria as early as 2004 under President Olu Ohasanio administration with among its goals to eliminate illiteracy in the country by imbuing literacy, numeracy, and communication skills in the citizenry. Though the programme is gifted with laudable objectives, it is constrained with myriads of implementation problems.

This paper identified the following UBE implementation constraints that will make its desired objectives not to be achieved. These constraints include attitudinal behaviours of Nigerian teachers. One cannot conclude this paper without pointing out that managerial factor that was not mentioned in this paper could equally hamper proper implementation of UBE. Finally, it is the belief of this paper that if the alternative or additional sources of fund are adopted lack of finance in implementing UBE will be a thing of the past. Therefore, it is hoped that the implementation of the suggestions contained in this paper will likely adequately lead to the realization of the goals of UBE, and hence, attainment of national development.

References

- Falola, F. (2003). F. G. Owes Varsities &303bn –ASUU Boss 11, August, Lagos: Punch Newspaper.
- Farayola, E. G.; and Vandima, M. T. (2001). Human and Material Resources for Universal Basic Education (UBE) In Wokocha, A. M. (ed). Quality Education and Universal Basic Education Programme, Port Harcourl: OSIA International Publishers Company.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). National Policy on Education, Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education.

Rev. Dr. Aloysius Alo Orogwu

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.
Lagos:

Federal Government Press.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000). Implementation Guidelines for the Universal Basic
Education (UBE) Programme. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.

Oyedijo A. (1983). Principles of Business Management. Ibadan: Continental Publishers Limited.

Soyode A. (1983). Constraints on Economic Development in Nigeria. In I. Z. Osayimwese (ed).

Development Economics and Planning, Ibadan: Department of Economics, University of
Ibadan,

Wokocha A. M. (2000). Education for Political Stability in Nigeria. Being a Convocation
Lecture delivered at the 13th Convocation Ceremony of the Federal College of
Education, Obudu May, 2000