ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN IMO STATE: TOWARDS QUALITATIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

In compliance with the worldwide call for Education for All (EFA) to which Nigeria is a major player, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was introduced into the Nigerian Educational System. The objective of UBE was majorly to increase access to education by making it affordable to all classes of people. Since the programme has been in operation for more than a decade, it is worthwhile to take stock of the implementation strategies with the view of providing information upon which future decisions can be based. This is pertinent especially considering that enrolment has increased in recent times as a result of making UBE truly free in Imo State. Have there been additional educational facilities to accommodate the new enrolment and to maintain the standard? The researcher was so intrigued. The study was aimed at ascertaining the availability and adequacy of educational facilities which are needed in schools to cope with the new enrolment. The population of the study consisted of all the principals in the 270 Junior Secondary Schools in Imo State. A sample size of 54 principals (20%) was drawn from both urban and rural areas using proportionate random sampling methods. Instrument for data collection involved checklist for availability and rating scale for adequacy of the facilities. Reliability coefficients of the instrument were ascertained using Cronbach alpha method to be 0.71 and 0.68. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation scores and chi-square statistics were used to analyze data. Results showed that most facilities were unavailable and available ones were
inadequate. It was recommended among others that more educational facilities should be provided to schools.

Assessment has to do with examination of all or some aspects of a thing, object or programme in order to detect areas of strengths, improvement, review or outright drop. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is an educational reform programme that has been in operation for about a decade. Its implementation in Imo State in the 2011/2012 academic year is with a difference. More children of UBE age have been put into school which obviously increased students' population from 58,864 in 2010/2011 to 89,685 in 2011/2012. This amounted to 52.4% increase (Imo State Ministry of Education, Research and Statistics Division 12/3/12). While the people of the State are happy because they no longer spend a ‘dime’ in the education of their wards, the worry is in the availability and adequacy of the learning needs of the students. In the wake of an upsurge in the students' population it is disturbing whether the existing educational facilities can accommodate the increase in enrollment. This is to ensure that quality is not sacrificed for quantity. This can be done by assessing the modalities alongside the UBE policy initiatives for comparability of standards.

What is UBE?

The right of a child to education has been an issue of global concern. Some 192 United Nations member states including Nigeria and up to 23 international organizations signed an agreement in Jomtien (1990) to promote Education for All (EFA). This objective was targeted to be achieved by the year 2015 (Uzoagulu 2010). There were several post Jomtien meetings and resolutions which culminated into the 8 (eight) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2001. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) No. 2 is a precursor to the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria. Anyaogu (2009) observed that UBE scheme is a response to the Universal Declaration of Human rights to Basic Education and the worldwide call to Education for All (EFA). UBE was launched by the Federal Government in 1999 in Sokoto State and was replicated at the State levels. Okoro (2010) Stated that the UBE Act of 2004 and the National Policy on Education (2004) compelled every government in Nigeria to provide access to basic and functional education from primary to junior secondary school. On this premise Okorocha (2002) described UBE as the provision of schooling, training, instruction and supervision for skill, trade, and professional acquisition taken as fundamental or starting point for all Nigerians without restrictions of any kind. Commenting on the expanded vision of UBE Okoro (2010) explained that UBE:

1. is a lot more than 9 years of schooling
2. is not to be equated with Universal primary education
3. is directed at children, youths and adults
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4. is diversified in terms of basic learning needs
5. focuses on learning.
6. is lifelong and begins at birth
7. is the responsibility of the state and whole society

As an educational reform that is geared towards the development of human persons there is need for continuous enhancement and improvement of educational services that will guarantee standards. Some of the policy initiatives that have formed the major characteristics of UBE are captured by Onu (2010) to include,
1. Free education
2. Compulsory uninterrupted 9 years of primary and Junior Secondary education
3. Provision of mid-day meals to enhance access to education and retention of learned material
4. Diversified curriculum to enhance relevance
5. Disarticulation of junior Secondary from senior secondary and integration of primary and junior secondary education.
6. Introduction of rudiments of computer
7. Appropriate and continuous teacher professional development courses.
8. Community ownership of schools including participation in decision – making

A cursory look at the above features reveals that items 1-3 tailor majorly toward liberalization of access to education which is the objective of Education for ALL (EFA). Items 4-8 are ways of ensuring functionality, quality and relevance. Reflecting on the universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Act (2004) Tahir (2010) reiterated that the full and successful implementation of UBE is hinged on sound policy, good governance, transparency and well-thought-out plans. Others are clear implementation strategies, steady disbursement of funds, and right caliber of personnel to manage programme, continuous monitoring and evaluation. These variables of successful implementation of UBE will certainly work out well in the states where the government is favourably disposed towards the education of the citizens. What is the situation in Imo State?

UBE in Imo State

Experience and research results show that before 2011/2012 academic year students paid fees and levies ranging from stake-holders fees (receipted) to some other levies that were not receipted. Parents bought books for their children (Ajuonuma 2010). In the present dispensation, not only that all forms of fees and levies are abolished, there is a policy meant to provide books, uniforms, sandals and bags free to students. In this regard, the principals are not to send out of school any student on the ground of lack of uniforms books or chair. Students who transferred to another school
are allowed to use the uniform of their former school pending when free uniforms will be issued to all students. Payment of stipends to students is introduced. Okorocha (2012:17) States;
1. We shall continue the payment of stipends ranging from N400 – N600 per pupil/student per quarter.
2. We shall provide writing materials to our pupils (biro, pencil, notebooks, textbooks etc)
3. Provide free uniform and bags
4. All schools in the state shall be computerized before the end of 2013

Furthermore the government of Imo State has promised as follows:

i. To provide scholarships of N25, 000 per annum to every pupil in the primary school system who is an indigene of the state. This amount is comparable to what is being paid in most relatively good and properly run private schools in the state.

ii. Government shall continue to be responsible for the provision and maintenance of all infrastructure buildings, computers, writing desks and monies paid as scholarship would remain in the schools for running of each school.

iii. Henceforth a scholarship of N40, 000 shall be paid to each secondary school student who is an indigene of the state.

iv. In line with what obtains in primary schools government shall be responsible for the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and all monies paid to the school to provide services.

v. However, pupils and students whose performance fall below set benchmark will not be entitled to such scholarships.

The payment of stipends initially was on monthly basis of one hundred naira (N100) for primary school pupils and one hundred and fifty naira (150) for students in secondary schools. Any student who was not in school at the time of payment (by a visiting team) missed the money.

Under these measures, street hawkers who are of school age left the street and went to school. Parents who before now did not take education of their children serious see the need to do so. Private schools lose their students in large numbers to public (government run) schools. The resultant effect is increase in students’ enrolment from 58864 in 2010/2011 to 89685 in 2011/2012 academic year giving a total percentage increase of 52.4.

Source: Imo State ministry of Education, Research and statistics division, 12/3/12.

Teachers were transferred from schools recently handed over to their church owners to government run schools. This has helped to cushion the negative effect of the upsurge in students’ population in respect of inadequacy of teaching staff. According to
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Oku and chikwendu (2010) the qualifications of teachers in Imo State School system is adequate as the least is national certificate in Education (N.C.E). what remains is to ascertain the adequacy of educational facilities in relation to the current students’ population. The purpose of this study is therefore to:-

1. describe the implementation of UBE programme in the junior secondary school in Imo State
2. ascertain the availability of educational facilities in the junior secondary schools in Imo State
3. ascertain the adequacy of educational facilities in Imo State Junior Secondary Schools.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study

1. What educational facilities are available in school?
2. To what extent are the educational facilities adequate?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the availability of educational facilities in school located in the urban and those located in the rural areas (p<0.05).

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the adequacy of facilities in the urban and rural schools (P<0.05).

Method

This is a descriptive survey. The population comprised all the 270 junior secondary school principals in Imo State. Proportionate random sampling techniques were used to draw 27 principal of schools in the urban to areas and another 27 principals of schools in the rural areas to constitute the sample size of 54. This represented 20% of the parent population. Instruments for data collection were of two types. The first part was a checklist of questions meant to elicit desired information on the availability of educational facilities in schools. The respondents were required to put a check on the option that best described the situation concerning a given item. The second part was a rating scale meant to ascertain the adequacy of the educational facilities. Response pattern included: very adequate (4points), adequate (3points), inadequate (2points) and very inadequate (1point). The content validity of the instruments were ascertained by four most senior colleagues in educational management and planning. Their contributions helped to get the final draft of the instruments. Reliability of the instruments were ascertained using 10 principals of schools that were not included in the sample. By Cronbach alpha method the reliability
indices were found to be 0.71 and 0.68 respectively. Administration of the instruments was carried out by the researcher on face to face basis. Considering that the schools were dispersed in location and to enable the researcher collect the filled copies in one visit, measures were taken to ensure this. To forestall vague responses and achieve due attention of the respondents, the researcher gave out new pens which the respondents retained after filling the instruments. This helped the researcher to establish good rapport with the respondents which enabled her to cover upwards of 8 schools in one day. Schools sampled in Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe urban towns were described as urban schools while schools sampled from some other towns were taken to be rural schools. Interview and direct observation were applied where the instruments were insufficient. Data analyses included frequency counts, percentages, chi-square and mean and standard deviation scores. Items having mean scores of 2.5 or above were considered adequate while items with mean scores below 2.5 were described as inadequate.

Results
Research question one: What educational facilities are available in schools?

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages (In Parentheses) of Responses on the Availability of Educational Materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Unavailable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalk</td>
<td>30(56)</td>
<td>24(44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks (students ’&amp; teachers’)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps and charts</td>
<td>31(57)</td>
<td>23(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library with books</td>
<td>21(39)</td>
<td>33(61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer laboratory</td>
<td>15(28)</td>
<td>39(72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economic equipment</td>
<td>18(33)</td>
<td>36(67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Crafts equipment</td>
<td>12(23)</td>
<td>42(77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic science equipment</td>
<td>23(43)</td>
<td>31(57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory technology equipment</td>
<td>16(30)</td>
<td>38(70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural equipment</td>
<td>13(24)</td>
<td>41(76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational/sporting facilities</td>
<td>11(20)</td>
<td>43(80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative power supply system</td>
<td>16(30)</td>
<td>28(70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data in table 1 above textbooks were entirely not available in the schools, 54 (100%) with the exception of chalk which was available in 31 schools representing 57%, and chalk 30 (56%) all other facilities had below 50% representation on the ‘available’ column.
Research question two: To what extent were the educational facilities adequate?

Table 2: Results of Responses on Adequacy of Educational Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Staff offices</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tables and chairs (for teachers)</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Desk and chairs (for students)</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chalkboard</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Registers and diaries</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chalk</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maps and charts</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Alternative power supply system</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Recreational/sports facilities</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four (4) out of ten items investigated were adequate. These were offices (2.55), teachers’ tables and chairs (2.85), chalkboard (2.62) and registers and diaries (3.20). Other facilities such as chalk, desks and chairs, classrooms, sporting/recreational facilities were inadequate for students’ population.

Table 3: Results of Chi-square Statistics Concerning Availability of Educational Facilities in Schools in Terms Of Location (Urban and Rural)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Unavailable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( X^2_{\text{cal}} )</th>
<th>( X^2_{\text{tal}} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calculated chi-square value, 0.48 is less than the table value, \( X^2 (1,0.05) \) therefore the null hypothesis is upheld. There is no significant difference in the educational provisions of schools in the urban and those in the rural areas. It means that location is not a factor in the availability of educational materials in schools.
Table 4: Results of z-test Concerning Adequacy Of Facilities in Urban and Rural Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>( z_{\text{cal}} )</th>
<th>( Z_{\text{tab}}(p&lt;0.05) )</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Ho₂, Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in table 4 indicated that the calculated z-value of 0.26 was less than the table value of 1.96 at \( p<0.05 \), null hypothesis two, Ho₂ was therefore accepted.

Discussion

Information in tables 1 and 2 showed that educational/learning facilities were in short supply. Classrooms and students desks and chairs were inadequate to accommodate the increase in population. This is to confirm Okpara (2009) opined that the 9 year, basic education will need 245,319 additional classrooms. This has a far-reaching implication for the realization of UBE objective of providing functional basic education for lifelong development. Similarly, Enaohwo (2009) observed that infrastructural provision is one of the determinants of quality and functional education. The data in tables 3 and 4 which showed that location is not a factor in the availability and adequacy of educational facilities portray the fact that facilities are not differentially provided to schools in Imo State. The acute shortage of educational facilities posed serious concern to the researcher that she had to make documentary evidence of the situation as shown in figures 1-3 below. In most of the schools especially in the rural areas the researcher observed students stooping, kneeling and others standing by the windows and doors as lessons were going on.

Fig. 1
Dilapidated and Abandoned Classroom Buildings
The implication is that the promise of the government to “be responsible for the provision and maintenance of infrastructure has not been fulfilled” (Okorocha 2012:17).
From tables 1 and 2 it can be discerned that all the instructional items are either inadequate or unavailable. The most striking among them are the textbooks which are lacking in all the schools. Oral interview with the principals revealed that the parents were waiting for government to provide books for their children. This is in line with the government’s promises to the people of the state which were further stressed during the February 14, 2012 State of Imo Address. During this address a sample of uniform proposed to be given free to the students was shown to the people. Amidst these robust promises which are the first of its kind in Imo State, coupled with the April 3, 2012 launching of free education at all levels, the parents show ‘deaf ears’ to the demands of their children/wards in respect of education. This is true especially considering that there is a policy forbidding sending a student out from school on account of lack of books uniform, bags, sandals, desks or chair.

The results of this study are not different from the findings of other scholars. Mbakwem (2010) found out that computer and alternative power supply provision to the schools are inadequate. Okpara (2009) has it that materials for teaching introductory technology were inadequate across board. After her assignment in one of the sampled schools in the rural areas, and she was about to leave the researcher witnessed the arrival of a group of men and women in a bus. Each member of the group had a Khaki coloured Cap on the head with inscription ‘Rescue Mission’. The researcher approached one of them and found out that it was the group whose duty it is to visit schools to ascertain students’ population and infrastructural needs of the schools. The researcher left with the hope that the physical facility problems of the schools in Imo State will soon be addressed.

However, data in tables 3 and 4 indicate that there is no disparity in the provision of educational facilities to schools in the urban and rural areas. That is location is not a factor in educational provisions for schools in Imo State. Despite the fact that some students in the urban area have their personal desks and chairs yet the difference in physical facilities in urban and rural schools is not significant. Opara (2009) confirmed that academic resources (facilities and equipment) have become increasingly in short supply. This is an indication of the urgent need to salvage the educational system by providing adequate learning environments in order not to compromise quality for quantity. Unavailability of Science and technology equipment is a serious challenge that demands urgent attention to ensure meeting of the objectives of UBE.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that implementation of UBE programme in Imo State has excelled in terms of achieving increased access to education. It is most
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desirable that the increment in enrolment be accompanied by a commensurable improvement in the learning needs of the students which this study has found out that it is not so. It is the hope that the monitoring Rescue Team will be able to give a verbatim report of the situation in order to hasten the fulfillment of government promises in the area of infrastructural and instructional facilities.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are put forward.
1. Facilities are as important to education as farm implements are to a farmer. Meaningful teaching and learning activities rarely happen without adequate facilities. Government should provide more classroom blocks, textbooks, tables and chairs, functional library, computer and other physical facilities and consumable materials to schools.
2. Most block buildings are in a state of disrepair, some are abandoned and overgrown by weeds. Government should carry out massive repairs of dilapidated buildings before embarking on construction of new ones.
3. Chalk is one of the cheapest but indispensable tools of a teacher. There can hardly be any teaching method that does not require the use of chalk by the teacher because of its role in blackboard illustrations and note-copying of the students. Chalk should be provided in abundance at all times to schools.
4. Plans should be made to replace blackboard with more durable white boards.
5. Funds used for paying stipends to students can be used to provide sufficient educational facilities if need be.
6. Private and Community Participation should be considered in the area of educational provisions to schools since government cannot provide all of them.

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