

# UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT: A CHALLENGE FOR AN EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

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## **Abstract**

The Universal Basic Education scheme is an ambitious educational programme intended towards accomplishing various wide ranges of objectives. On the basis of the above statement, this paper discusses the concept of UBE and the envisaged problems that could hinder effective achievement of the desired national objectives. In addition, the paper also advanced suggestions on the management of UBE for an effective economic rehabilitation and reliance in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Basic education in Nigeria has gone through different phases of policies in the past decades. Each ruling government be it military or civilian has realized the importance of primary education as the foundation for effective formal education. This has necessitated the change in planning and implementation of educational programmes especially the primary sub-sector.

For instance, the Universal Primary Education was introduced nationwide by the Federal Government of Nigeria in September 1976. The major intention was to provide educational demands of the Nigerian populace. Review of the UPE after a decade showed that the national education objectives were not satisfactorily realized due to certain problems such as financial problems, insufficient competent teachers, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infra structural and teaching facilities, narrow curriculum content and high rate of drop out (Fafunwa, 1976).

In view of the shortcomings of the UPE, a new educational system, the 6-3-3-4 was introduced nationwide by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1982. This system emphasized that a child shall spend six years in primary school, three years in junior secondary school, another three years in senior secondary school and four years in tertiary institution.

Again, educational analysts observed that the 6-3-3-4 system did not fully realize its objectives partly because of the inherent problems of the UPE<sub>1</sub> which were not effectively corrected before the commencement of the new educational programme.

In the present globalization trend, this sub-sector will either have to respond to the challenges ahead or it could be left behind in the technological race. It is in realization of this notion, that the present democratic government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo launched the Universal Basic Education in 1999, (UBE Digest, 2002). The UBE programme has the purpose to provide qualitative, free and compulsory education to every Nigerian youth from primary school to the junior secondary level.

A striking common feature of all the basic education programmes including the new UBE, is that the policy statements are clearly spelt out with derivable objectives and plan of implementation. This paper attempts to ask questions like why were such objectives not achieved? Has the inherent problem which militated against UPE and 6-3-3-4 systems of education been reviewed to create favourable conditions for the implementation of the objectives of the current UBE programme? How can UBE be managed for an effective economic rehabilitation and reliance?

It is in an attempt to provide answers to the above questions that this paper discusses the management of UBE as a challenge for an effective economic rehabilitation and reliance.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

For an indepth comprehension of the subject matter of this paper, the following operational terms were discussed:

- (a) Management
- (b) Challenge
- (c) UBE programmes and objectives
- (d) UBE for effective economic rehabilitation and reliance.

## **Management**

Various scholars have defined the term management in different perspectives. Adesina (1983), defined management as a systematic arrangement and utilization of available resources for the attainment of the desired objectives of an organization. Olubadewo, (1992) viewed management as the judicious utilization of the scarce resources for the accomplishment of the set objectives of an establishment. Other scholars Dare et al (2002) express management as intelligent arrangement and utilization of human, material and financial resources for the purpose of achieving the desired objectives of a well organized system.

From the foregoing definitions of the concept, management of UBE for effective economic rehabilitation and reliance implies:

- Systematic arrangement and utilization of available resources for the attainment of the desired objectives of the programme;
- Educational resources such as human, material and financial should be available in quantity and quality for utilization for the attainment of U.B.E objectives for economic reliance.

## **Challenge**

Hornby (2000) defines challenge as a new or difficult task that tests somebody's ability and skill. It is the opinion of this paper that U.B.E management is a serious challenge because the programme implies large numbers, issues of quality control in standard, etc. A task that must be accomplished successfully.

## **Universal Basic Education Programme**

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is an ambitious educational programme which was launched and executed by the government and people of Nigeria in 1999. It aims at laying the foundation for life-long learning, self awareness, citizenship and life skills (FGN, 2000). The framework of action of the programme is no longer defined in terms of years of schooling. This indicates the restructuring and reorientation of the nation's education system with a focus on technological, economic and social development both at the local and state levels. Obanya (2000) further emphasized that UBE is not a static policy, but a scheme that should respond to the aspirations of the people. He said UBE is a necessary foundation in curing the educational ills of the country, hence its functional background.

## **Objectives of UBE Programme**

Universal Basic Education seeks to achieve the following national objectives:

- (a) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- (b) The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- (c) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethics, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. (FGN, 2000 : 4).

According to Adeniran (1999) the Federal Government schemed the programme to cover:-

- (a) Six years primary education
- (b) Three years junior secondary school education and
- (c) Non-formal education.

The national objectives of UBE imply that a child shall spend six years in the primary school and three

years in junior secondary school. The education programme shall be tilted towards acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills.

The UBE will also function as out of school, non formal programme, for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basic education needed for life-long learning. Also, the UBE is expected to provide non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the opportunity of formal education.

The national objectives of UBE are laudable and highly orchestrated. There is the urgent need to look into envisaged national problems which may jeopardize the effective implementation of the UBE programme for an effective national economic rehabilitation and reliance.

### **UBE Management Challenges**

Antecedent education programmes such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE), and 6-3-3-4 must be reflected upon in order to guard against the problem of ineffective implementation and management of the UBE in the present dispensation.

The envisaged challenges ahead for the process and success of the UBE programme are similar to those which militated against the effective implementation of the UPE and 6-3-3-4 systems of education. Dare (2000) sums it up that, inaccurate data for planning, inadequate funding, supply of competent teachers, infrastructure, facilities, narrow curriculum content, poor public enlightenment, poor social mobilization, poor monitoring and evaluation system thwarted the -efforts to achieve national objectives in full. Such management problems discussed below are serious constraints for effective success of implementing a programme.

#### **Inaccurate Data for Planning**

This points at the challenge of large numbers. Universalization of basic education and compulsory feature is likely to become a major challenge for management at all levels. This challenge becomes further complicated by Nigeria's well-known data problem. The national population census which is expected to provide a reliable source of data has always been politicized. Educational planning in Nigeria is based on projected statistical data, which is often inaccurate for educational planning.

#### **Inadequate Funding**

Inadequate funding was a major factor which affected the effective implementation of U.P.E and the 6-3-3-4 systems of education. This is likely to affect the realization of U.B.E objectives. According to Implementation Committee on U.B.E, a total amount of 500 million dollars was estimated for renovation of the existing school structures throughout the country. This estimate did not include cost of building new classroom structures. The issue here is that funds provided are inadequate and the purpose for which it is allocated is not achieved. Funds should be promptly released with prudent application towards targets for which they are meant.

#### **Inadequate Supply of Infrastructure and Facilities**

This is another envisaged problem in the face of the UBE programme. According to Baike (2000) most existing structures are dilapidated and in the state of disrepair. This further leads to the problem of inadequate teaching materials due to over enrolment.

Akinyemi (1983) observed that growth had been emphasized at the expense of development. Okeke (1989) also believed that most plans failed because of poor logistics at the implementation phase. Management challenges which UBE might face if not addressed include:

- Expansion of primary education without due regard to provision of enough qualified teachers;
- Over-crowded classrooms;
- Ineffective management of schools;
- Inadequate management of infrastructural materials like textbooks, teaching aid materials etc;
- Poor funding;
- Imposition of fees and other levies;
- Poor physical facilities in terms of school buildings and classrooms;

- General lack of systematic planning of primary education; and
- Poorly managed resources and insufficient school inspection by education officials (Taiwo, 1980, Gyallesu, 1999 and Usman, 2000).

### **Teacher Recruitment, Reorientation Training and Retention**

The UBE Implementation Committee (2000) estimated that 1.2 million pupils will be registered at a ratio of 1:40. This implies that about 30,000 teachers will be required to teach the number of registered students. As noted in the National Policy on Education, the teacher factor is very important for the success of all educational programmes. Therefore, for the success of UBE, existing teachers in schools should be reoriented periodically, new teachers be recruited and all trained teachers be retained in the system. Also their allowances and salaries should be paid as when due in order to get the required service from them.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation System**

Quality control, supervision, monitoring and evaluation should be given special attention if UBE is to succeed. Monitoring and evaluation of UBE programmes should be a normal practice of ministries of education. This should be related to the full professional station of planning and research unit of the ministry of education. Monitoring and evaluation system under the UPE was ineffective hence the need for correction in the present UBE.

### **Narrow Curriculum Content**

Existing curriculum at the level of UBE should be reviewed and developed in order to meet the changing nature of the school system and circumstances of time. The UBE is likely to face problem of narrow curriculum content which was a set-back in the accomplishment of UPE and 6-3-3-4 system of education. Baike (2000) stated that completion rate in primary schools is 64% and the transition from primary to junior secondary schools is 43%. The question here is what happens to the bulk of those students who could not make it to the junior secondary school?

### **Universal Basic Education Programme for Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance**

The importance of basic education in Nigeria and indeed any nation of the world cannot be over emphasized. Basic education remains the back bone on which any future education is built upon. Obanya (2000:13); Obasanjo (2000:14); NPE (1981:12) all attested to the importance of this level of education. In view of this, investment in education and training has been recognized as one of the key conditions for a competitive and cohesive society in all facets of life. UBE programme therefore, if efficiently and effectively implemented will foster and facilitate a better life and economy in its recipients. The effective management of UBE will enhance acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communication, manipulative and life skills, and employable useful skills to the individual and the society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic values, (UBE: 2002).

This suggests that standard as well as quality should be maintained making the programme feasible towards economic rehabilitation and reliance of Nigerians.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing discussion, on the management of Universal Basic Education for effective economic rehabilitation and reliance, the following recommendations were advanced:

Funding of the U.B.E scheme should be given proper consideration. Alternative arrangement should be thought of instead of the government solely shouldering the funding of education.

In addition, a strong monetary mobilization venture that would reasonably complement financing policy should be put in place so as to achieve the objectives.

Government, stakeholders and other agencies of UBE programme should be equipped with accurate statistical data for planning and implementation of UBE objectives for economic reliance.

The curriculum of instruction of UBE should be designed to meet the pressing demands of the

21<sup>st</sup> century through acquisition of skills and computer literacy.

Adequate supply of teachers to cater for the large numbers with professional skill should be provided.

Teacher motivation through incentives, training and satisfactory remuneration should be put in place for UBE to achieve its objectives;

Education officials at all level should enlighten and orientate the public and educational agencies such as parents, community members and even philanthropic organizations the roles they can play in contributing to the success of the basic education programme.

Collaborative management approach is further suggested as one of the best strategies for implementing the objectives of UBE scheme. Many nations have used this approach to effectively implement such educational programmes (Fagbenii, 1996; Ahmad, 1994).

Adequate supply of educational facilities - infrastructure and teaching materials in quality and quantity should be guaranteed to make UBE a success.

Monitoring and evaluation of UBE programme implementation should be carried out periodically and constantly by professionals.

### **Conclusion**

The objectives of UBE programme are enormous and viable for the attainment of economic rehabilitation and reliance. In order to achieve these results, pragmatic changes have to be effective in the area of adequate funding, curriculum instruction, adequate teacher and teaching material provision, as well as constant monitoring and evaluation of the system. An in-depith analysis of the previous education system will go a long way in making corrections of the past experiences towards an effective implementation and management of the UBE programme today.

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