

## THE PLACE OF UBE IN THE DEMOCRATIC NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The Universal Basic Education Programme was one of the earliest programmes launched by the Fourth Democratic Republic of Nigeria. UBE is a properly articulated programme intended to improve the educational system in the country as it concerns literacy and basic skills. The programme has an encompassing scope with well-formulated objectives (to achieve functional education which will facilitate her course of scientific and technological advancement to match the recent trends of the JET Age demands of industrialization and globalisation. The paper reviewed the scope, objectives and skills of the UBE programme to the learners. It also examined (the provision of democracy for UBH in Nigeria and how these provisions are being impeded making it difficult to achieve the set goals of the programme.

### Introduction

The Universal Basic Education Programme launched in Sokoto by President Olusegun Obasanjo on September 30, 1999 was the first educational policy among other government policies of the Fourth Democratic Republic of Nigeria designed to enhance the acquisition of literacy and basic skills by Nigeria towards national growth and development.

Unlike the Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE) which only dealt with the primary school level alone, the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) extended its coverage from the primary school level up to the secondary school class 111 (JS III) and beyond that to include non formal education and learning-to-learn skills programmes. These levels are properly specified in the *National Policy on Education* (FGN, 198 ; Revised, 1998).

The idea of free education was conceived in Nigeria as far back as 1955 and 1957 when the Western and Eastern Regions commended their free education programmes respectively, though that of the Eastern Region couldn't survive the limes beyond one year of commencement. This idea of free education was polarized by the UNO charter of 1948, which demanded every sovereign state of the world to offer its citizens the right to free education. Drawing an inference from the charter, Awolowo (1971) concluded that education was the right of every individual to be borne by the state if civilization must continue.

The move by these regional governments attracted the Federal Military Government of Nigeria into the Nigeria's education industry by introducing the Universal Primary Education Scheme in September 1976 though it couldn't survive its tenacity of purpose due to poor planning and general mismanagement of the programme. Ezeocha (1990) and Mkpa (1991.) supported that poor planning, implementation and mismanagement of the UPE was responsible for its failure just after a few years of commencement. Because of the past experience, the UBE has been properly packaged and guided by a number of objectives.

### Objectives

The Universal Basic Education Scheme has the following as its objectives.

- I. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. The provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child for school-going age. 3- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance quality and efficiency}.
4. 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.
5. 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.

## **Scope**

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme covers the following areas:

1. Programmes/initiatives for the childhood care and socialization.
2. Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life-skills; especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above).
3. Special programmes for nomadic populations.
4. Out-of-school, non-formal programmes for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning.
5. Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education.
6. The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the Junior Secondary School.

From the above, it is clear that the UBB is a very ambitious programme which spans from the formal, non-formal, life skills to learning-to-learn skills. Okebukola (2000) praised the UBE programme for having given full considerations to non-formal education and education for special groups like the nomads.

The scope of the UBE is very involving taking into consideration non-education and education for special groups like nomads and the female folks.

## **Democracy**

Democracy is generally referred to as a government of the people for the people and by the people. It also points to a nation with principles of government in which all adult citizens share through their elected representatives (*Advanced Learners Dictionary*). This implies that the UBE is a programme for all to contribute fully towards achieving its great objectives. In other words, the Universal Basic Education is a democratic divided to Nigerians, therefore, illustrating democratic principles and governance in operation. The UBE being a privileged of this system must have all the cushioning effects to survive in all ramifications. It has all the legislative process to guide its growth, development and success in the economy. The UBE is a highly rewarding programme of education to Nigerians that, if properly implemented, will make Nigerians not only literate but functional in life. It may also produce the greatest number of literate citizens in black Africa since Nigeria is the most populous nation of Africa. With the above intentions and many others in mind, Nigeria made the following provisions for Universal Basic Education in "Nigeria.

## **Extensive Scope**

The UBE scope took into consideration all the necessary human skills that an individual can acquire to help him function well in the economy. It also considered all groups and individuals in the study programme. In order to carry every Nigerian along, the UBE scope began from Primary 1 to Secondary Class III (JS III) up to including the non-formal and learning to learn skills. This scope is guided by a well formulated objectives towards changing the vision and general life style of Nigerians. A keen study of the scope of the UBE will also point to the revival of Nigerian values and orientation towards the current trends of the new world of globalisation and industrialization. The level of the programmes are properly outlined in the *National Policy on Education* (FGN, 1998).

## **Teacher Employment and Training**

To meet the teacher requirement of the UBE Scheme, the Federal Government through the National Teachers Institution (NTI) Kaduna is training the teacher grade II and the NCE teachers in centres located in various parts of the nation. The Local Government Education Authorities have been permitted to up-date staff strengths of their primary schools by recruiting some qualified teachers within their jurisdictions for this purpose. Obanya (2000) and Mkpa (2000) confirmed that the teacher is a very vital factor among others in the successful implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

## **Funding**

Federal Government having discovered its pitfalls that walloped the UPE decided to invite the services of some foreign associate like the World Bank, UNICEF to help in the funding and management of the programme in Nigeria. Tabotndip (2001) claimed that improved funding of the UBE through the high budgetary provisions of the federal, state and local governments will be reinforced by funds from

education tax fund, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the World Bank.

### Rolling Plans

The Federal Government initiated the strategy of using rolling plans for the UBE programme as logical estimations of what is, needed, when, how and where to apply it. These rolling plans are put in place to aid rational investment and fair distribution of the necessities. These budgetary plans a provision by the government to avoid a collapse of the scheme just like what happened to the Universal Primary Education. An example of such a plan is displayed on the table below.

Universal Basic Education Rolling Plan 2001-2003		Estimated Cost		Phasing Period	
S/No	Project Title	2001	2002	I 2003	
1.	Rehabilitation, renovation, construction of Schools (Primary and JSS)	N15h	N5b	&5b	I45b
2.	Completion of two zonal offices Owerri and Bauchi	258.5m	89.5m	89.5m	89.5m
3.	Perimeter fencing of staff quarters site as Karmo Abuja	48.8m	229m	239m	0.5m
4.	Zonal coordinator's residence at Owerri and Bauchi	40m	18m	18m	4m

5.	Zonal office transit camps at Baiichi and Owerri	86m	30m	28m	28m
6.	Motor Vehicle Boats	198m	198m	-	-
7.	Office furniture and equipment	45m	30m	15m	-
8.	Household furniture (Snr. staff Transit Camp)	153m	153m	-	-
9.	Plant and Machineries	27m	12m	9m	6m
10.	Library shelves	7m	3m	2m	2m
11.	Books and Audio Visuals	27m	12m	9m	6m
12.	Computer Awareness at Primary School Level	4,869b	2,44b	1.22b	1.209b
13.	Printing press	210m	210m	160m	30m
14.	Internal Connection	36m	24m	6m	6m
15.	Computer Education in School	4.8b	2.4b	1.2b	1.2b
16.	Education Management information System	130m	74m	39m	19m
17.	Nomadic Education (Field Operation)	537,023m	2639m	161.7m	106393m
18.	Nomadic Educations (Capital Subventions)	537.96m	26993m	161.7m	10633m
19.	Allocation to SPEBS for Capital Projects	7.5b	2.5b	2.5b	6.5b

**Source:** UBE Annual Report, Year 2000.

The above table is a laudable expression of how much the Federal Government planned to accomplish the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. The satisfactory accomplishment of this plan will go a long way to stabilizing the UBE programme towards achieving the literacy and functional educational needs of Nigerians.

### **Problems of UBE**

After three years of commencement, the Universal Education is in confusion because it had no enabling law to differentiate its planning from the implementation stage. It is unfortunate that the scheme has not fully taken off in practical terms in many states of the federation: Where it seemed to have taken off the impact it yet to be felt by the masses. Gidado (2001) lamented over the UBE lapses saying that the absence of an enabling law two years after of launching the UBE programme has stalked implementation.

### **Data**

The problem of accurate data has been responsible for the failure of many educational programmes in Nigeria. The UBE has this problem at take because there are no accurate statistical data to work with. Much of what is used as data for the UBE are mere estimations that could be very unreliable and defective for the programme. The first data generated by the Universal Basic Education implementation agency after the take-off of the programme in 2000 was contested and has put its use on hold (Didado, 2001). For the Universal Education to survive, perfect educational statistics, effective technical capacity for accurate data collection and analysis must be implored. Tabotndip (2001), Nwagwu (1999), Visa (1988) also saw the question of data as a difficult one because the exact number of Nigerians in and out of the country is unknown.

For example, the projections of needs for the UBE at the Secondary School Level could be unrealistic because they lack a base, though useful to some extent.

### **Junior Secondary School Enrolment Projected Needs for UBE (1995-2005)**

Class	1995	1999)	20005
JSI	3.201.000	3,622,000	4.092,000
JSII	3,i35,000	3,547.000	3.965,000
JSIII	3,071,000	3,474,000	3,630,000
Total	9,407,000	10.643,000	1 1.687,000

Source: Adapted from Opoola (1993) Free Universal and Compulsory Education in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects.

### **Management**

The management of the Universal Basic Education is divided between the states and the federal government. The entire primary school system is in the hands of the federal government controlled by the National Primary Education Board while the Junior Secondary Class I — III is in the hands of the state governments controlled by the State Primary Education Board and the State Ministries of Education. This position is a difficult one to manage for any realistic results, especially that the states treat their secondary schools system to strike actions most of the time.

### **Teachers**

Nigeria is blessed with quantity and quality of teachers that when given orientation would be able to implement any educational programme to a logical conclusion. The idea of going to train teachers doesn't arise at all. It may be reasonable to say that the federal government is defending statist

ignorantly by not spreading the already trained teachers nationwide. The general disrespect and ignominy of teachers in Nigeria is an incurable problem in the teaching/learning industry. Mkpá (1991) pointed out that the teacher is the pivot of every educational policy implementation process and must not be underestimated.

## **Drop-Out Syndrome**

The UBE has the problem of learners dropping out of school for various reasons best known to them and their parents. But the most spectacular one is the fact that many of the affected children together with their families believe that the school is a waste of time and does not pay off any more. In many cases they cite the unemployed graduates roaming the streets as cases in issue.

Despite the provision of the UBE to accommodate all classes of children, it is seeming difficult to reduce the rate of children dropping out of school annually. Ekennia (1994) suggested that drop-out syndrome among children in the primary and secondary school is a behaviour pattern to be eradicated through behaviour modification.

## **Funding**

Despite all the plans put in place to source and disburse funds to the UBE Scheme, the problem of the funds not being properly applied to the UBE projects exists. It is unfortunate that the planners of UBE failed to consider a legal backing to the source and application of funds as necessary, Ekefere (2000), FME (2000), Ezeibekwe (2002) and had warned that transparency was needed to make this Universal Education Programme a reality in Nigeria.

## **Infrastructural Facilities**

Many school structures and equipment are dilapidated and need urgent replacement nationwide. The renovation or replacement procedures of these necessities are very slow as against the degree of need by the schools. Out of a total of 293,013 classrooms in the 44,292 schools in the country, 109,926 classrooms are in good conditions while 183,087 classrooms require rehabilitation. An addition of 539,034 classrooms are needed to accommodate the 511,939 of streams of classrooms (FGN, 2000). Fraenkel (1973) contended that the school plant is an indispensable necessity in the teaching and learning exercise. Obanya (2000), Gidado (2001), Aliero (2002) had the school plan in mind among other factors when they warned against faulty implementation of the UBE in Nigeria.

The population explosion in schools is a problem that needs to be attended to immediately if effective teaching and learning must be achieved. *The National Policy on Education* stipulated a pupils-teacher ratio of 1:35 but this is hardly attainable anywhere in the country (FGN, 1981; Revised, 1998).

## **Public Enlightenment and Mobilization**

The Federal Government has the problems of enlightening and sensitizing the public towards believing that the UBE Scheme is reality in Nigeria. It also has to prove practically that it is not a political party ideology that will fizzle out with the party when the time comes. The enlightenment programme should take off from the grassroots where a majority of the masses are and who are disgusted with government policies and programmes.

## **International Covenant**

Nigeria has no option than to preserve and respect the various international educational conferences to which it is signatory and a member. Prominent among these is the 1990 Jomtien Declaration (Gidado, 2001). Failure to keep to the tenets of these conferences will lead not only to back-mail but disregard of international relationship which may affect the Nigerian economy in the future.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should provide legal backing to the UBE programme that will streamline its activities at various stages.
2. The Government should re-position the UBE from its present position between the Federal and State Governments to avoid jurisdictional ambiguity.
3. The Nigerian teacher's welfare should be considered highly as an implementer of educational programmes if any such programmes must succeed.

## **Conclusion**

The Universal Basic Education Programme is a baby of the Fourth Democratic Republic of Nigeria having all provision of a Democratic Government to enjoy. The UBE is a versatile and an

encompassing programme of education intended to erase illiteracy, ignorance and provide functional skills among Nigerians towards attaining self reliance, self actualization, nationalise industrialization and globalisation.

But unfortunately for this programme, its plan was a hasty one, a condition among others that laid the previous programmes like the 6-3-3-4 and the UBE to rest. No doubt, after three years of commencement, its impact *Is* yet to be felt nationwide all because of the surging problems from the planning to implementation stages.

It is therefore imperative for the Federal Government to revisit the UBE in its indispensable conditions before these conditions are regarded as irreparable loss to the nation.

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