

IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS OF THE UBE SCHEME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper highlights the poor implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) and the way out. It sees the need to ensure a purposeful funding and monitoring of the scheme by all the tiers of Nigerian government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including every individual who is residing in the country as one arm alone cannot make it to succeed. The paper is of the view that the UBE is supposed to be recognized as a veritable tool to address issues of poverty, under development health problems, conflicts and intolerance, human rights abuse, and so no, in accordance with the provisions of UNESCO. It recommends, among others that if Nigerians can shun corruption and all its ramifications, the UBE will actually succeed for the common good.

Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with human, material and natural wealth in all sections of the economy. This is why all education programmes in the nation's economy should be able to produce skill competencies for the workforce so as to justify qualify utilization of material resources in the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE). Anyakoya (2003) opined that the UBE is supposed to be recognized as a veritable tool to address issues of poverty, under-development, quality population, illiteracy, ignorance, gender inequality, indiscipline, disorderliness, health problems, conflicts and intolerances, human rights abuse, etc. In accordance with the provisions of UNESCO (2005).

In this regard, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE, 2004) expressed feat her education is to be seen as an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. Hence, Ukeje (1979) quoting O'Connor (1957), gave five aims of education as enumerated below;

- (a) to provide men and women with the minimum of skills necessary for them to take their place in the society, and to seek further knowledge;
- (b) to provide men and women with vocational training that will enable them to be self-supporting;
- (c) to awaken an interest in and a taste for knowledge;
- (d) to make people to become critical in their thinking;
- (e) to put people in touch with and train them to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements of mankind.

Additionally, when the Obasanjo Regime launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme on the 30th September, 1999, an implementation programme was spelt out so as to achieve the following specific 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-going 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 levels of literacy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

In this regard, Nigeria's current Universal Basic Education (UBE) is very laudable on paper, but very poor in its implementation. Currently, there are signs to show that it is not succeeding. Eraikhuemen (2000) stressed that attempts in the past to provide free education, whether at the

Federal or State level, have never succeeded. Taking a cursory look into h, especially from independence in 1960, the former Western Regional government installed a free education programme in 1955. Also, the former Eastern Region established a free education system in 1956, and both of them failed woefully.

In addition to this, Eraikhuemen (2000) asserted that hi 1976, General Olusegun Obasanjo, who was then the Military Head of State, mounted the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, and it did not achieve the desire goals. In the same vein, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) of the former Bendel State, under the governorship of Prof. Ambrose Alli, established free education programme in 1979, which also did not succeed.

UBE in Nigeria

Nigeria is a signatory to many international covenants, and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is one of them as evidenced by the following:

- (a) Ouagadougou Conference on the Education of Girls and Women (1982)
- (b) World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), Jomtien, Thailand (1990).
- (c) Delhi Declaration of E-9 Countries (1991).
- (d) Sixth Conference of African Ministries of Education, Dakar (1991).
- (e) The Seventh Conference on the Education of Girls and Women (1998).
- (f) The O.A.U. Decade of Education in African States (1997-2000).
- (g) Dakar World Forum on Education for All (April, 2000).

In this connection, Obanya (2000) and Idusogie (2006) opined that the Universal Basic Education scheme (UBE) was launched in Sokoto (Nigeria) on the 30th of September, 1999, by President Olusegun Obasanjo as one of educationally backward nations of the world; and also to actualize and give credence to it through practical implementation.

Arisi (2002:306) added that UBE is a programme intended as a visible evidence of Nigeria's strong commitment to the Jomtien Declaration of 1991 which requires stringent efforts by the E-9 countries (nine nations of the world with the largest concentration of illiterate adults) to reduce drastically illiteracy within the shortest possible time frame. It is also a commitment to the Durban Statement of 1998, and the O.A.U. In addition to this, the O.A.U. Decade of Education in Africa (1997-2006) requires African States to generalize access to quality basic education as the bedrock for sustainable and viable economic development of the continent and the world in general.

The Constitutional Backing of UBE

Obanya (2000) illustrated that the UBE is also in keeping with the requirements of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). The educational objectives are stated in section 18, as follows:

“...Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.”

“...Government shall eradicate illiteracy, and 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 programme.”

Obanya (2000) also explained that basic education, according to the Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action on Education for All, is not defined in terms of years of schooling. Neither is it limited to formal schooling. The author further asserted that it sees education in its broadest sense as of a close articulation of the formal, the non-formal and informal approaches to the awakening and all-round development of the human potential. Hence, the broad aim is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning-to-learn, self-awareness, citizenship and the life skills.

Obanya (2000) also stated that the Federal Government was to carry out a process of sequential implementation plan for a progressive nine years duration that would ensure basic and qualitative education cycles. Now, H has been replaced with nine years of primary education, three

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years of secondary education and four years of university education/Taking it further, Obanya (2000) stressed that during the 9-year “gestation period”, states and local governments will progressively improve the conditions of:

- (a) teacher quality improvement;
- (b) updating of infrastructural facilities;
- (c) enhanced availability of instructional materials.

In addition to this, as UBE is “education for all”, it is supposed to take care of the nation's youth up to tertiary institutions and eventually become self-reliant in their various skill in line with NYSC scheme's objectives as follows:

1. To inculcate discipline in the Nigerian youth by instilling in them a tradition of industry, hard work and of patriot and loyal service to the nation in any situation they may find themselves.
2. To raise their morale by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievements, social and cultural improvements.
3. To develop in them attitudes of mind acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them to be more amenable to mobilization in the national interest.
4. To develop common ties among them and promote national unity.
5. To encourage members of the service corps to seek, at the end of their corps service, career employment all over the country, thereby, promoting free movement of labour.
6. To induce employers, partly through their experience with members of the service corps in order to employ more readily qualified Nigerians irrespective of their states of origin.
7. To enable Nigerian youth to acquire the spirit of self-reliance.

Hindrances of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

The hindrances to the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria are as follows:

(a) By Telling Lies through Issuing of Fake Receipts and Inflation of Contract Sums or Unit Prices.

Aguan (2007:58) explained that many government officials tell lies right from the beginning of implementation. The author further explained that such officials in charge of implementation plan:

- (i) Criminal wastages of huge sums of money and other material resources through telling lies of varying degrees by issuing fake receipts and certificates to contractors so as to cover high costs supposedly incurred or expended on construction of roads, bridges, buildings and international stadiums including electricity power supply, pipe-borne water supply, provision of drugs to hospitals, etc.
- (ii) Inflated contracts for the procurement/supply of tools, gadgets, instruments, equipment, machines, laboratories, furniture and fittings, etc, to schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities.
- (iii) Inflated hotel bills;
- (iv) Inflated kilometer or mileage coverage between work stations and official headquarters;
- (v) Frequent repairs of supposedly vehicle break-downs,
- (vi) Inflated cost of petrol/diesel for vehicles, and so on.

In this regard, when so much money has been siphoned out through the above decaying habits, there would be nothing left to implement any programme for the general good of citizens. This is why Saraydarian (2005) opined that when many people are involved in telling lies with a view to gaining monetary or material reward, it is a sign that such people are personality or self-centred, and their actions will never favour other people and their environments. Hence, they misuse their positions to enhance their greed.

(b) Inadequate Educational Infrastructure: This is one of the worst problems facing effective implementation of the UBE, Arisi (2002) stressed that inadequate classroom spaces have resulted in over-crowding in schools. Many primary and secondary schools were built long time ago by both government and church missionaries. Hence, most of the buildings, roof-stops, desks, chairs, tables, floors, etc., have become extremely bad.

Many village schools which were built with self-help efforts have been damaged due to long neglect especially blown roof-tops, damaged floors, destroyed windows/doors, and have been occupied by reptiles, while the children take lessons under the trees or shades. Government ought to have put some efforts to renovate them so as to accommodate more pupils but this was not done. Instead, government began to build one block of three classrooms in each primary school with approved colossal sums of money, whereas, it would have been more economical and beneficial to renovate than to build new ones. Hence, only few primary and secondary schools with fewer structures would have needed new ones. This problem is still persisting till today.

- (c) **Inadequate Funding of Schools:** This is a very big problem, hence, the failure to prioritize the use of available funds that would cover areas of need like: employing qualified teachers, procuring textbooks, improving on existing infrastructures, procuring equipment, instruments, teaching aids, and the like.

Lack of funds has resulted in the absence of workshop in schools, in training and re-training of teachers at all levels, inadequate provision of classroom buildings and laboratories, etc. It also affected the attendant problems of shortage of libraries and of stocking them with relevant up-to-date textbooks, as well irregular payment of teachers salaries and allowances.

- (d) **Teacher Utilization:** This is another major obstacle. Musa (2000) has stated that the major problem confronting teacher utilization is in their allocation and distribution to schools. This means that there are many teachers in the urban and sub-urban areas as compared to those in the rural and remote areas. In this case, there is lack of competence of teachers' utilization in both urban and rural areas. Hence, a teacher's competent utilization is achieved when there is a good combination of his or her general education, mastering of teaching subjects and personal qualities in the day-to-day discharge of duties.

In this regard, it is a common place to find in most of our public primary and secondary schools that even though teachers are qualified, their personal vices being displayed towards work have affected their competencies. There are numerous personal vices like: absenteeism, frequent ill-health or excuses, frequent maternity leaves, uncooperative attitudes, working at loggerheads with headmasters, headmistresses, principals and members of staff, etc., exceedingly lower the quality of competence, and as such, contribute to lowering the standard of UBE teachers,

- (e) **Lack of Enriched UBE Curricula:** The UBE curricula are yet to be enriched in accordance with its goals and objectives and they ought to have been carried out in several dimensions. The areas for immediate attention are:

- (i) Laying a good foundation for life-long learning;
- (ii) The inculcation of appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy;
- (iii) Developing good aptitude for practical work;
- (iv) The acquisition of socially desirable life skills;

They are very related to the teaching and learning of vocational and technical education skills including classroom work and laboratory practice. Also, they equally apply to all forms and conditions of out-of-school learning at the time a child drops from a formal school system.

- (f) **Poor Knowledge of Practical Use of Equipment and Maintenance Culture:** Presently, there is a wide-scale poor practical skills among students who have graduated from JSS level, as there is nothing to show that they have learnt the use of equipment in laboratories especially in vocational, technical and science subjects. Hence, the issue of maintenance culture has continued to elude the country.

- (g) **Lack of Statistical Population Data for UBE Planning:** There is lack of population data bank in Nigeria that ought to aid UBE planning especially in the provision of more classroom spaces, laboratories, teaching aids and equipment, etc. what happens in most cases is that

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population figures are usually over-politicized; hence, it has not been easy to allocate school-age population figures from the publicized population census data. It has affected the technical capacity including the logistics for data collection analysts. This is why it is difficult to plan and implement the UBE programme.

- (h) **Poor Monitoring and Evaluation:** As a result of inflated number of pupils for the UBE by many state governors, adequate monitoring of the school since 1999, and evaluation has been faulty. This depended on the managers assigned to do so. Therefore, Nwagwu (2002) suggest that:
- (i) there must be choice of appropriate performance standards and indicators;
 - (ii) there should be a systematic programme of supervision, inspection and data collection and utilization for periodic monitoring and evaluation of the process and progress of the compulsory education scheme.
- In this regard, Nwagwu (2000) also stressed that the implication is that the administrators of the UBB should always monitor not only the nature and rate of attendance, truancy and drop-outs, but also they have to evaluate the reasons why such pupils or students behaved in a particular manner.
- (i) **Problems of Integration of Private Schools into the UBE Scheme:** This is another problem. Nwagwu (2000) also asserted that the attendance of pupils or students in public schools is not the only way of satisfying compulsory education regulation. Private schools should be involved.
- (j) **Poor Electricity Power Supply:** This is the most basic problem because electricity is the power that moves small-scale businesses, laboratory practical works, industries, etc. it has remained a mirage in Nigeria's political dispensations as-a result of the 'political will' to do so. Nigerian leaders are merely interested in what they are able to gather from the economy; hence, nothing works for the general good.
- (k) **Brain-Drain Syndrome:** This is due to the poor condition attached to teaching by the attitude of the government. The reward system in cash or fringe benefit cannot be compared with other professions. This is responsible for the high rate of trained teachers who abandon teaching for more lucrative professions.

Conclusion

This paper has x-rayed the reasons encouraging the poor implementation of the UBE programme: like poor monitoring and supervision including other factors, of the various stages of the scheme. It adds that high-level corruption in low and high has been adduced the greatest cankerworm that has eaten deeply into all Nigeria's economic base. Furthermore, the paper recommends, among others that it is only the Nigeria people that can stop all forms of corruption before the country can develop. This is a sure way to make the UBE programme succeed.

The Way Out

It is not easy to implement any national programme in Nigeria like the universal basic education (UBE) scheme. It cannot succeed without nurturing some values to live by at the background of it. They are as follows:

- (a) **Competence and Selflessness:** Selfless service is a quality exhibited by a leader by considering the general good of the people at heart and play down the dictates of his personality desires. While competence is achieved when there is a good combination of a person's education, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes in doing things. This is double-sided, that is, certification and personal attitudes, and both of them must merge to produce a good work. In this vein, when the quality of selfless service is combined with competence, the natural flow of good work achievement that would be of benefit to the general good of the people or society will emerge. Hence, President John F. Kennedy of the United States of America in 1963, advised American citizens that they should not ask for what the country

would do for them but what they would do for country.

- (b) **Leadership by Example:** Leadership by example is very much lacking •& Nigeria's programme delivery system, but it is a value ingredient to be nurtured at the background of implementation of the UBE programme. This type of value of is absent especially where finance, structures and equipment are involved. In most cases, leaders think of what they would gain in money or money 's worth from the system rather than using their positive and crating thinking to increase productivity in seeing to it that the scheme succeeds as is done in advanced nations.
- (c) **Monitoring:** This is an important ingredient because monitoring is a kind of "watching and recording or keeping track of events in an implementation process in order to ensure that a scheme is being implemented to specifications (Eraikhuemen, 2000). Hornby (2006) defined accountability as the state of being responsible for one's decisions or actions, and one is expected to explain them when asked. This is where many projects, programmes or schemes fail in Nigeria. All forms of corruption are the hallmark of Nigeria's backwardness. The is certainly affecting the universal basic education programme.
- (d) **Sincerity of Commitment:** For any scheme to succeed, there should be sincerity of commitment and purpose to be nurtured at the background of it. Recent happenings in Nigeria's political scene reveal that politicians in power are just interested in how much money or money's worth they are able to gather or to make out of their positions rather than being interested in actual execution of programmes in accordance with work specifications. What one sees nowadays is that there are fine UBE buildings in place but the teachers' salaries including other support staff have not been adequately taken care of while contractors are hurriedly paid their entitlements. While legislators are concerned with how much money they are to make form the national cake with little or no interest in seeing to it that UBE becomes part and parcel of Nigeria's educational system. No wonder Clark (1999) and Adedoyin (2001) said that Nigeria's politicians do not encourage people-centred development but enslavement.
- (e) **Good Habit of Hard Work:** This is also an important aspect of die implementation process of any programme like the UBE, Good hard work, in this respect, contributes immensely towards the development of the environment through a person's display of the right attitude to work coupled with his skill competencies and punctuality. Where there is hard work, the products achieved good longevity, thereby, enhancing self-reliance.

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