



Review article

A critical analysis of universal basic education on its implementation so far

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ABSTRACT

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This paper attempts to give a general overview of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme in Nigeria. It ranges from the purpose of its establishment, its objective, the framework for its operation, its implementation so far and the challenges the scheme is currently facing. The paper suggests the way forward for the Universal Basic Education Scheme in Nigeria. This was followed lastly by critiquing based on personal conviction of the writer as to the UBE scheme in Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Education has variously been defined as permanent change in behaviour as a result of learning. It consists of all efforts made by society to accomplish set objectives which are considered to be desirable in terms of the individual as well as the societal needs. Education therefore remains one of the most powerful instruments for both development of man and transformation of human society. The efficacy of education as an instrument of transformation depends entirely on how the government manages the project meant for the education system. All

over the world, primary education has been regarded as the most important as well as the most inclined to by people. This may be due to the fact that it is the foundation of the whole educational pursuit, which is expected to provide literacy and enlightenment as well as the social encouragement and security to the citizenry. The importance of primary education can as such be seen in the sense that all beneficiaries of the other levels of education by necessity, have to pass through its level. Indeed the success and failure of the entire system is determined by it (primary education) and it is at the heart of the concept of basic education which has been defined as the universalisation of accessibility to education (Oni, 2008).

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the type of education in quality and content that is given in the first level of education. The concept of UBE changes from country to country. The UBE program in Nigeria according to Eya (2000) is intended to be universal, free and compulsory. Basic Education according to the Federal Government of Nigeria (1999) is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal education activities and programs designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy. In other words, Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria was equated with six years of primary schooling in the past and currently, it is extended to include the three years of Junior Secondary School, leading up to 15 years of age. In Nigeria, basic education includes primary, junior secondary and nomadic education well as adult literacy (Jekayinfa, 2007). In this regard, the sole aim of basic education in Nigeria is to equip individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to:

- Live meaningful and fulfilling lives
- Contribute to the development of the society
- Derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society and;
- Discharge their civic obligations competently

(Federal Ministry of Education, 1999)

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a reformed program in Nigeria's basic education delivery and is to reinforce the implementation of the National policy on Education (NPE) in order to provide greater access and ensure quality throughout the federation as it is free and compulsory (Adomeh, Arhedo & Omoike, 2007). Meanwhile, Nigeria is adopting UBE as a process of fulfilling the aim of Education for all (EFA) as endorsed at the world conference on education held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. According to the world conference on education, basic education is made free and available to all and sundry. For this reason, emphasizing free access, equity, efficiency, literacy, numeracy and lifelong skills for all. Therefore, UBE is being implemented in Nigeria as a lasting legacy for the eradication of illiteracy.

In order to drive the point of this paper home and depict a clear picture of the topic, it is sub-categorized into the following divisions, each of which is going to be taken one after another and give the details of some explanations. The divisions are:

1. Background history of UBE
2. Objectives of the UBE
3. Framework for operations of UBE
4. The implementation of UBE
5. Challenges facing UBE
6. The way forward for UBE
7. Critiquing on UBE
8. Summary
9. Conclusion
10. Recommendations

2. Background history of UBE

In 1948, the universal declaration of human rights asserted that everyone has the right to education. Subsequently, a world conference on education for all (EFA) was held in Jomtien, Thailand, for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide to basic education for all. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the program which grew out of that conference (Dike, 2000). In 1955, the concept of universalisation of primary education began in the Western region of Nigeria under the premiership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo who introduced the free, universal and compulsory education, popularly referred to as Universal Primary Education

(UPE). The universalisation of primary education in Nigeria initially was a regional project whereby as a political response to the UPE program in the Western Region, the premier of the Eastern region launched his own UPE in the region. While the UPE program in the West was characterized by story of success, the same cannot be said of UPE program in the Eastern Region as it was characterized by a short of planning resulting into numerous problems. Each region in this case including the Northern region tried to develop its own program of promoting education among its citizens.

However, the process of making universalisation of primary education a national project started with Obasanjos' regime in 1976 during the military rule. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, the UPE program that originally started as a regional project was redesigned by the national government to provide education for the Nigerian citizens by changing the content of the UPE (Eddy & Akpan, 2009) to encompass the following philosophy of education as articulated in the National Policy on Education. This philosophy emphasizes: the development of the individual into a count and effective citizens, the full integration of the individual into the community and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education both inside and outside the formal school system.

In this regard, the concept of UBE cannot be said to be alien to Nigerian education system. The Universal Basic Education can be regarded as an offshoot of the Universal Primary Education, (UPE) Scheme, which was launched in the country in 1976. But this was eventually abandoned mid-way (Aluede, 2006). President Olusegun Obasanjo formally launched the UBE in Nigerian on 30th September, 1999. The program is intended to be universal, free and compulsory. The aim and goal of this program is providing functional, universal and quality education for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, race, religion, occupation or location. UBE is broader than UPE, which focused only on providing educational opportunities to primary school age children. UBE stresses the inclusion of girls and women and a number of under privilege groups including the poor, street and working children, rural and remote populations, nomads, migrant workers, indigenous people, minorities, refugees and the disabled.

3. Objectives of UBE

The Universal Education (UBE) program as was re-introduced in 1999 and launched on 30th September in Sokoto by the federal Government of Nigeria, under the auspices of President Olusegun Obasanjo has, at its time of launching the following as its objectives and the reasons for its re-introduction

- Ensuring an interrupted access to 9years formal education by providing FREE and COMPULSORY basic education for every child of school going age under:
 - a) Six years of primary education
 - b) Three years of junior secondary education providing early childhood care development and education (ECCDE)
- Reducing school drop-out and improving relevance quality and efficiency
- Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living.
- Emphasis on curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations
- Introduction of rudiments of computer literacy
- Appropriate continuous teacher professional development

In addition to foregoing, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) commission in its annual report in 2005 listed the objectives of the Universal Basic Education to include

- a) Ensuring unfettered access to 9 years of formal basic education
- b) 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; and
- d) Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative communication and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

However, all these objectives that are expected to be achieved in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) are traceable to the provision made in the 1999 Nigerian constitution which clearly spelt out the objectives of the state in section 18 that

Government shall eradicate illiteracy; to this

End, government shall as and when
Practicable provide a free and compulsory
Universal primary education, free secondary
Education and free adult literacy programs

This could be considered as UBE-legal provision which legally supports and made it constitutional to implement the objectives of the commission to every nook and cranny of the country irrespective of gender, creed, community, ethnicity and other differential considerations. This is because, by its acronym, UBE has three main components universal, basic & education. Universal here means the program is for everyone irrespective of tribe, culture or race and class (Aluede, 2006; Eddy & Akpan, 2009). The term basic depicts that which is a fundamental or essential thing that must be given. It is on this factor that every other thing rests on. Without it, nothing can be achieved. It is the root for acquisition of any knowledge (Eddy & Akpan, 2009).

4. Framework for operations of UBE

In order to make the universal basic education to be operational throughout the country, the federal government of Nigeria created a commission saddled with the responsibility for coordinating all aspects of UBE programs and their implementation. The vision and mission of the UBE commission clearly spelt how the framework for its operation should look like. The following is the vision and mission statements of the commission:

Consequent upon this was the enactment of an Act tagged UBE Act on 26th May, 2004. This is to make the achievement of the aforementioned objectives, vision and mission of the UBE program successful and possible within the possible time frame. The following should be observed as captured in the UBE Act 2004.

- The federal governments' intervention shall provide assistance to the states and local governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform and qualitative basic education
- Every government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age.
- Every parents shall ensure that his/her child or ward attends and completes
 - a) Primary school education and
 - b) Junior secondary school education
- The stakeholders in education in local government area shall ensure that every parent or person who has the care and custody of a child performs the duty imposed on him/her under the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004
- Transition from primary to junior secondary school (JSS) should be automatic; as basic education terminates at the junior secondary school level, thus, entrance examination may no longer be necessary. Emphasis will be placed on effective continuous assessment while final examination and certification will now be done at the end of the nine-year basic education program.
- The secondary school system should be restructured so as to ensure that the JSS component is disarticulated from the SSS as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE)

These are some part of what is contained in UBE Act of 2004 which sought to make the realization of what has been set in the mission and statements operational. Similarly, in an attempt to avoid the problems which impeded the realization of objectives of the past educational programs, the government outlined implementation guidelines to facilitate successful achievement of the stated objectives. The guidelines include:

- Public enlightenment and social mobilization, for hull community development
- Data collection and analysis
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Teachers; their recruitment, education, training, retraining and motivation.
- Infrastructural facilities
- Textbooks and instructional materials
- Improved funding and
- Management of the entire process

These efforts by the governments are aimed at providing education to all Nigerians and if these provisions are strictly adhered to, the operations of the commissions stated objectives would be made successful.

5. The implementation of UBE

The implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) depends on quite a number of things which ranges from funding, staffing, infrastructure; etc. in line with this, UBE Act (2004) stresses that the implementation of the universal basic education shall be financed from:

- Federal Government block grant of not less than 2% of its consolidated revenue fund
- Funds or contributions in form of federal guaranteed credits and;
- Local and international donor grants

However, the UBE Act of 2004 also emphasized that for any state to qualify for the federal government block grant pursuant to sub-section (1) of this section, such state shall contribute not less than 5% of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project. The administration and disbursement of funds shall be through the State Universal Basic Education Boards (UBE Act, 2004). The federal government intervention to the UBE is done quarterly (4 times in a year), and a counterpart fund of equal amount is expected from the states and is expended as follows: Nursery (5%), primary (60%) and junior secondary school (35%), while it is disbursed in each level of education as follows: infrastructure (70%), manpower development (15%), and instructional material (15%) (Ekpunobi, 2006).

As part of the implementation process which preceded the declaration by the federal government of Nigeria for the introduction of 9-years free and compulsory basic education structures which cover primary and junior secondary schools, strategies have been put by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to re-structure and re-align the school curriculum for the 9-years basic education (Obioma, 2006). A total of 19 curriculum have been produced to cover the junior primary (year 1-3) senior primary (years 4-6) and junior secondary school (JSS) (year 7-9). Primary science has been replaced by basic science and technology for junior and senior primary school levels, while integrated science has been replaced by basic science for JSS level (Nneji, 2006; Obong, 2006).

Meanwhile, another way through which UBE programs are implemented is through close collaborative partnerships between UBEC and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs). Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) and Basic Education stakeholders at all levels. In addition to these partnerships, there is need to welcome contributions and full involvement from all individuals, corporate entities civil societies and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the derive to achieve Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The following are also considered part of the implementation strategies so as to ensure hitch-free implementation.

- Effective monitoring of UBE implementation to ensure quality
- Teacher professional development being accorded priority attention as a percentage of the intervention fund goes directly to in-service training of teachers in all states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
- Education of the girl-child and other disadvantaged groups being given greater attention than ever before
- Improved infrastructural developments led to increased accesses to basic education
- Transformation of the education terrain as it affects basic education in the area of school infrastructural development. This has been achieved through judicious use of FGN-UBE intervention funds. This is the first time Basic Education has a quantum of funds being pumped in by federal state governments

As part of the implementation policies also, the commission tracks utilization of UBE intervention and states counterpart funds based on the level of utilization. During the period 2005-2009, the following have been provided through the utilization of the UBE intervention and counterpart funds in 36 states and FCT

- Infrastructural development
 - a) Construction of new classrooms 41,009
 - b) Renovation classrooms – 59,444
 - c) Provision of furniture for pupils and teachers 1,139,196
 - d) Construction of toilets – 14,769
 - e) Sinking boreholes – 996
- Provision of instructional/play materials – 77,570,540
- Teacher professional development – 1,493,352 teachers trained
- Provision of primaries 4 and 5 textbooks in Mathematics, English Language and activity-based science – 16,356,812
- Assorted library resources materials for JSS- 1,710,091
- Deliverables from special education of physical challenged children fund
 - a) Number of schools/centers that have benefitted – 368

- b) Enrolment – 20,639
- c) Classrooms – 710
- d) Resource rooms – 344
- e) Boreholes/hand pumps – 36
- f) Toilets/bathrooms – 263
- g) Furniture for pupils – 3,616 sets
- h) Furniture for teacher – 1,259 sets
- i) Beddings- 2,266
- j) Instructional materials – 75,255
- k) Equipments such as Computers, Wheel chairs, Braille Machines, TV sets, Radio sets etc – 14,641
- l) Teachers trained – 6,247

Another strategy adopted to ensure the successful implementation of the UBE program is the initiation of UBE community initiated self help project. The self help project of the UBE program is designed as a strategy to involve the community and private sector participation in basic education delivery through the initiation, execution and administration and ownership of designated school projects. Basic Education funding, administration and implementation are gradually becoming the responsibility not only of the government but that of the communities through Parent Teachers Association (PTAs) and Community Based Organization (CBOs). The self help strategy has proved to be very rewarding in providing requisite infrastructure and services within the school environment as well as galvanizing popular community ownership of UBE program and increased the opportunities for increasing access, quality and equity in UBE delivery. Other implementation strategies include:

- Federal Teachers Scheme (FTS)
- Inter-Agency Cooperation
- Collaborations with International development Partners
- Curriculum Improvement
- Programs aimed at addressing the problem of our of school children

6. Federal teachers' scheme (ETS)

The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Federal Teachers' Scheme (FTS) in 2006 with the aim of addressing shortage of qualified teachers in the basic education sub-sector. The scheme which is being financed through the Debt Relief Gains (DRGs) is a two years program designed to cater for unemployed NCE graduates. Under the scheme, NCE graduates are employed by the Federal Government and posted to states for a two-year period before formal absorption by states and LGEAs. The first batch of 40,000 participants completed the service in October 2008. UBEC enlisted 34,000 fresh participants in January 2009 while states have absorbed 27,000 produces of the first batch into their work force.

7. Inter-agency cooperation

In recognition of the multi-sectoral and cross-cutting nature of UBE program implementation, UBEC pursues and implements critical sub-sector related program in collaboration with other agencies with distinct responsibilities within the federal ministry of education. In this regard, the following are some of the achievements recorded:

- Production and distribution of the new 9-years Basic Education Curriculum to all public primary and junior secondary schools across the country
- Development, production and distribution of training manuals to provide the knowledge and skills required to plan, design, organize and evaluate training program for all those that are concerned with the implementation of the 9-years basic education curriculum.

8. Collaborations with international development partners

The Universal Basic Education Commission is mandated by section II of (i & j) of the UBE Act 2004 to facilitate and ensure smooth collaboration with international Development Partners (IDPs) and non-governmental

organizations to boost basic education delivery in Nigerian. In keeping with this mandate, UBEC has attracted financial and technical supports from IDPs; prominent among which are:

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) project for the construction of additional classrooms phase I in Niger, Plateau and Kaduna State (2004-2008)
- Strengthening of Mathematics and Science (SMASE) in Niger, Plateau and Kaduna State (2006-Date)
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) project for the construction of additional classrooms phase II in Kano, Katsina, Oyo, Adamawa, Gombe, Ebonyi and Borno where Kano is now on board as a pilot state.
- Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) which supports basic education in the area of classrooms construction in Kogi, Katsina, Gombe and Adamawa States. The program in Katsina and Kogi were completed and handed over on July 30th 2010 while those in Gombe and Adamawa State are being implemented
- China Assisted four rural primary schools in Nigeria whose intervention is in Kaduna, Katsina, Ogun State and FCT.
- The World Bank, UNICEF and USAID are supporting states to fast track the achievement of EFA goals through support funds under EFA-FTI funds
- Education Sector Support Program in Nigeria (ESSPIN) is supporting institutional capacity building of UBEC and SUBEBs official in educational planning strategy.
- British Council is currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UBEC and the states to provide technical capacity for English Language teachers in Lagos, Kano, Enugu, FCT Abuja, Rivers, Oyo, Sokoto, Adamawa and Yobe States. Under this program, 1000 primary school teachers of English Language have been trained by March 2011 and another 1,800 by October 2011.

9. Curriculum improvement

The following have been achieved in the area of curriculum development and improvement:

- Setting up National Early Child Care minimum standards for ECCE centers
- Approval of the integrated Early Childhood Curriculum for 3-5 years by the National Council on Education (NCE) for pre-school child growth and early stimulation
- Production and distribution of the nine year basic education curriculum materials to all public and junior secondary schools in the 36 states and FCT.
- Introduction of the 9 years basic education curricular into schools for step-wise implementation beginning from 2008/2009 academic year in primary 1 and JSS 1.
- Training 40 master-trainers in each of the 36 states and FCT on the philosophy and content of the basic education curriculum in August 2008. The state level training by master-trainers has also been conducted.

In line with governments' desire and global agitation for the provision of enhanced opportunities for the education of out-of-school children, UBEC has undertaken program and activities aimed at tackling challenges associated with the girl-child and Almajirai phenomenon. Recently, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) set up a ministerial committee on Madarasah education to advice government on steps to be taken towards addressing the Almajirai challenge. The committee has since submitted its report which is currently being studied by the FME. It is expected that UBEC, together with sister agencies will partner with FME to implement recommendations of the ministerial committee on Madarasah education.

10. Challenges facing UBE

The new Universal Basic Education started by 1999 and did not take off at the same time in various states of the federation, as a result of which the assessment of the achievement so far recorded may be too early. However, as young as the scheme is, the challenges it is facing both at the federal and state level are obvious. The world over, ability to allocate enough funds for a program remains the greatest challenge that a program could ever have. This is also the case with the funding of the universal basic education in Nigeria. Between 1999, when the country returned to international participatory democracy and 2009, the central government has spent greater than 1.13 trillion on the education sector alone, with the little to show for such huge expenditure (Folorunsho, 2009). It is evident that the federal government has not spent up to 15% of its total budget on education in the last

ten (10) years of uninterrupted democracy. The highest allocation so far was in 2008, when 13% of the budget was allocated to education. This pattern of allocation, which is below the UNESCO's threshold that is 26% of the total budget, is certainly affecting the implementation of government policies on education and in particular the universal basic education since its inception. This position has been well captured by Diki (2001) and Igbuzor (2006), when they observed that the government is in the habit of allocating less money to the education sector and consequently, limits the successful implementation of its programs. It is also imperative to note that the phenomena of corruption are making the implementation of UBE untenable to a larger extent, thereby making the allocation fund in acute shortage. Another major challenge to successful implementation of the UBE scheme is lack of proper planning on the part of government (UNESCO, 2012).

However, the inadequate of population data has also affected the provision of instructional materials such as textbooks, laboratory equipment audio visual material etc., which in themselves constitute another major challenge to successful implementation of the IBE program.

11. The way for UBE

Yoloye (2004) observed that, the concept of Basic Education is not completely new term to the Nigerian society and that within the last decade, it assumed a global significance and its meaning has been broadened. Since the expanded vision of UBE comprise the universalizing of access and promotion of equity, focusing on learning and enhancing the environment observe the following as a way forward towards the realization of its successful implementation:

- Adequate Funding: Whatever allocation is given to education by the government, it should be independent of overhead cost i.e. salaries and allowances. Salaries should be treated as a separate component and the expenditure on education should be closely monitored to curb the menace of embezzlement by the people charged with the responsibility of the scheme.
- Qualified Teachers: One of the ways of ensuring how the scheme of UBE could be successful implemented is through the provision of adequate and qualified teaching staff. Since the provision of more schools automatically translates to provision of more qualified teachers, government should make provision and prepare for training of qualified teachers in the country. In this regard, colleges of education as well as faculties of education in the universities should wake up to their responsibilities in giving adequate and qualitative training to the prospective teachers.
- Adequate Supervision: The Universal Basic Education in collaboration with State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) should rise to the challenge of constant supervision so as to ensure that teachers are actually performing their duties as expected of them as at the time of their recruitment
- Reliable Data: Effective planning strategies should be put in place using reliable and appropriate data banks in UBE scheme. Proper and adequate data shall enable proper and adequate projection. This will enable the education planners and government to make proper plan ahead.
- Appropriate Curriculum: The curriculum to be used in basic education should include social and democratic values, academic skills and psychomotor competencies, which contribute to our national needs. The curriculum should be structured in such a way that the standard of education is raised.
- Provision of Infrastructure: Our children must not be made to sit under trees nor in open fields for instructional purposes due to inadequate number of classrooms. A provision should be made of textbooks, instructional materials, computer etc.
- Egalitarian Philosophy: Our new approach to education (Basic) must emphasize the egalitarian philosophy in response to democratic tenets. This means the quality of educational opportunity must be provided for all children regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation, physical and mental disability and socio-economic and other developmental agencies should strengthen ties in order to tackle education funding and skill development both for children, teachers and facilities.

12. Critiquing on UBE

Right from the time the program was introduced as Universal Primary Education (UPE), it has undergone a series of transformation and de-transformations, improvements and de-improvements, centralization and de-centralization, capitalisation and de-capitalization, merits and de-merits, success and failures and has attracted

quite a number of contributions from educationists and people in the position of authorities depending upon the extent of their understanding. Based on what has been extracted from such literatures, the researcher was to take a position on and looked at Universal Basic Education from his own world and offered some contributions based on what the program is supposed to be yielding as a national phenomenon. As earlier on mentioned, the program encountered quite a number of successes and failure in what the researcher referred to as:

- 1) Transformation and De-transformation
- 2) Improvements and De-improvements
- 3) Capitalization and De-capitalization
- 4) Centralization and De-centralization
- 5) Merits and De-merits

Before dwelling into how each of the points mentioned above is related to Universal Basic Education (UBE), it is good if the meaning of the prefix 'de' is made known to people who may eventually lay their hands on this materials for reference or other purpose. The prefix 'de' according to advance learners' dictionary 6th edition has been given two different definitions;

- 1) The opposite of and;
- 2) Removing something. So now it would be seen how the program has been transformed, improved, centralized, capitalized, merited and the corresponding 'de' of these concepts:

13. Transformation and de-transformation of UBE

By transformation, it means a complete change of something from one state to another state. The simple question to ask here is that; has UBE program actually changed from its initial state when it was first established or not? The program can be said to have been transformed to different stages because it was introduced since before the country became an entity (independent). This was when the country was operating under regional governments, when by 17th January, 1955 the program kicked off in Western region as Universal Primary Education (UPE). Later when the government was changed to military government the program resurfaced, when by 6th September, 1976, it was launched as Universal Free Primary Education in Nigeria. This is an indication of another stage of transformation. By 30th September, 1999 the government launched the program again with different name entirely from previous ones; this time as Universal Basic Education. This series of transformations are each with features distinct from the preceding ones.

De-transformation has on each occasion occurred because if not for de-transformation, right from the time the intermediate one was introduced i.e. by 1976 which was for the whole country, there would have been no need for re-introduction again. The state of the program by 1955 was marred by problems and this led to little achievements and such little achievements recorded in the first one was what motivated the subsequent governments to have conviction of re-introducing the program so as to see if it could be well restructured to give more of its objectives a certainty of actualization.

14. Improvements and de-improvements

By improvements, it means the act of making something better. As such, what is to be asked here is whether UBE has actually been improved or not? The program was made better to some extent because of the commitment of government through collaborative efforts between the three tiers of governments in funding the scheme. From the way it was introduced initially and could not be actualized in some regions due largely to inadequate funding and infrastructural problems, one can say an improvement has been made. This is evident in the number of infrastructures that have been provided. Since its re-inception in 1999. This ranges from the construction of classrooms, renovation of the old ones, provision of furniture for pupils and teachers, construction of sinking boreholes, construction of toilets, provision of instructional materials for teachers as well as playing materials for pupils. There was also the provision of textbooks in subjects like Mathematics, English Language and activity-based science. All these are improvements since when the program started; no such type of provision was made as a result of which he program had to be banned completely.

On the other hand, de-improvement could be looked at from the point of interaction between above mentioned infrastructures. If the infrastructures provided were handled efficiently by the people and used judiciously, then it could be said to have been well maintained but failure of people to do so may be considered as

de-improvements and this can subsequently lead to the total collapse of the system. This can make the authorities concern to feel reluctant in seeing to the sustenance of the program; and if the program could not be sustained, the goals set to be achieved might hardly be actualized and the Nigerian child for whom the program was established may continue to suffer in terms of the acquisition of basic education.

15. Capitalization and de-capitalization

The program can be said to have been given a huge amount of money when it started. This is because every part of the implementation process requires capital. For example, teachers recruited to be part of the program must be well paid. The infrastructure to be made available must equally be dependent on what has been earmarked by government. Virtually, everything considered important in UBE has to be well funded before it could take effect. In this respect, there is need in the increase of the funds so that the areas yet to be covered would be covered within the time frame.

16. Centralization and de-centralization

The program was initially centralized to the federal government because it was the initiator of the programme but because the beneficiaries are closer to other tiers of governments, the program was eventually decentralized to include states and local government. This has been captured in the mission statement of the commission which states that UBEC would operate as an intervention, coordinating and monitoring agency to progressively improve the capacity of the states, local governments and communities in the provision of unfettered access to high quality basic education in Nigeria. This is what informed the idea of de-centralization of UBE programs and subsequently gave birth to SUBEBs i.e. State Universal Basic Education Boards.

17. Merits and de-merits

Though the program undergone quite a lot of setbacks, but it is meritorious for government to have what virtually has an all-round effect; meaning a program whose aim is to cover the whole country in all its nook and crannies. The program helped over the years in addressing the issues of teachers' unemployment. Teachers whose states could not absorb them in the profession may depend on UBE for employment. Previously, before the re-introduction of the program, the process of admitting pupils into junior secondary school was is automatic, having successfully finished primary school. This is in addition to all that has been mentioned above.

However, UBE could be de-merited in the area of providing language experts who would translate the textbooks to be used in teaching the pupils since it is allowed to use indigenous language in teaching the pupils at basic level. This further compounded the problem of comprehending curriculum contents by pupils at basic level.

18. Summary

An analysis has from the begging been made of universal basic education in Nigerian which ranges from the evolution, objectives, its operations, implementation, challenges and how the scheme could be improved to meet the purpose of its establishment. The scheme was believed to have started as Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1955 as a regional program in the defunct south western region of country under the premiership of late Obafemi Awolowo. The scheme was later launched in 1976 to include all parts of the country under the military leadership of Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo and later by 1999 under the same Obasanjo as elected Nigerian President, Universal Basic Education was launched on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto State.

The scheme was established to ensure the provision of free, compulsory and uninterrupted access to 9years formal education (Basic) for every child of school-going age. It was also to help in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living. The scheme also has the mission to operate as an intervention, coordinating and monitoring agency to progressively improve the capacity of states, local government agencies and communities in the provision of access to high quality basic education in Nigeria.

19. Conclusion

The UBE scheme has since from its inception been successful in most of its projects but it was not without short comings; one of which is inadequate sensitization strategies. There are still a greater number of parents who are not well informed about why UBE was established. Such types of parents are supposed to be well sensitized through publicity, advocacies and public awareness. If this is done, the expected teacher-pupil ratio recommended by National Policy on Education would be achieved. The ratio is 1:40 and 1:35 at both secondary school and primary school levels. Another factor that should be considered instrumental in seeing to the success of UBE is teacher. There is need to retrain the existing teachers in the country to reshape their orientation towards the need for qualitative education in Nigeria. Above all, teachers should be positively motivated; meaning, their condition of service should be improved to keep them on the job.

20. Recommendation

Based on what has from the beginning of the paper been observed, the problem likely to affect the whole process of universalizing basic education in Nigeria is lack of properly trained teachers. For this reason, it is highly recommended that professionally trained teachers should be recruited and disbursed across primary and junior secondary schools nationwide.

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