

# UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (U.B.E): THE CONCEPT AND CHALLENGES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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## **Abstract**

Education is the all round development of an individual, mentally, physically, emotionally etc. the fundamental principle of UBE in Nigeria is that every body must have access to equivalent education comprehensively. Basic Education is not completely new but its meaning has been broadened after the world declaration on Education for all (EFA), and the frame work for action to meet basic leaning needs. This paper ex-rays the concept, challenges and curriculum involved needs. This paper ex-rays the concept, challenges and curriculum involved in the implementation of UBE programme, it also suggested some recommendations that would help in achieving the desired objectives.

Education has remained a social process in capacity building and maintenance of society for decades. It is a weapon for acquiring skills, relevant knowledge and habits for surviving in the changing word.

Education is dynamic and keep on changing under to meet up with man's need. Most countries deferent educational systems to meet up with challenges of life. For instance Nigeria has adopted different educational systems to meet up with challenges of life. For instance Nigeria has adopted different educational system. These include: Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was launched on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1955 by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

This UPE scheme was set up so every child has right of six years education. Before the introduction of UPE, the duration of primary education was seven years then with the

introduction of UPE, the system was adjusted to 6 years in primary schools.

The National Policy on Education 1981, in very broad term is often called the 6-3-3-4 system of Education. This is six (6) years of primary Education, three (3) years of junior Secondary education, three (3) years of Senior Secondary education and a minimum of four (4) years of tertiary education to obtain the first degree. The 6-3-3-4 system of education has some advantages but it failed for lack of instructional materials, lack of teachers, finance E.T.C.

The 6-3-3-4 educational system was not properly implemented and as a result the main purpose was not achieved. Then the new Universal Basic Education (UBE) was now introduced. The six years of primary and the three years of junior secondary are collapsed into nine (9) years of basic education. The curriculum of primary and junior secondary schools may be modified into nine years of Basic education. There may be no radical departure from the curriculum in the 1981 and 2004 editions.

## **The Concept of the Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

Universal Basic Education scheme was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto. UBE emerged during the world conference in Jomitiem, Thailand held from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March 1990 with a view to carter for learners. Sequel to the world conference on Education for All (Jomitiem, Thailand 1990), governments around the worlds met in Darker in April 2000 to, review progress

made on the international goals set in Jomitem. They arrived at 6 goals and 12 strategies to number 2 goals says universal access to and completion of primary education by the year 2000.

The UBE programme is an express of the strong desire of the governments to fight poverty and reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general educational levels of the centre citizenry.

UBE represents a clarion call by the Government of Nigeria for all partners and stake holders- government sector, and international development partners, to rally under the slogan "Education for All is the Business of All"

The UBE scheme is a planned course of all the learning experiences touching directly on lives of the Nigerian child. Thus, the goal of the scheme is universalization of access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria (Okam, 2002). There are three components of the scheme which include provision for formal basic education for the first nine years of schooling (Primary and Junior Secondary education) for all children, nomadic education for school going aged children for pastoral nomads and migrant fisherman and literacy and non-formal education for out of school children, youths and adults. In the formal sector, it is anticipated that by 2006, the primary school component will merge with the first three years of secondary education.

The UBE scheme basically addressed the heart of EFA goals 3 through 4 espoused in Darkar in April 2000 around primary education, appropriate learning and life skill programmes and adult literacy.

#### **Objectives of UBE Scheme**

The objectives of the universal Basic Education (UBE) as specified in the

implementation guideline by government in 1999 are as follows:

- Developing in the entire citizenry, a strong conscientiousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- Provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system.
- Catering for young persons, their schooling as well as other out of school children or adolescent through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the provision of UBE.

Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulating communicative and life skill as well as the ethical moral and civic values needed for carrying a solid foundation for the life long living. (AJEDS 2008: Pg 5)

#### **Curriculum Innovation**

The term curriculum innovation and curriculum change have often been used interchangeably.

Unruh and Alexander (1974), viewed innovation in general as the introduction of a novel factor, perceived as new by a given school or community, supported by a driven force and implemented as a practical advance that deviates from established or traditional forms. Chauhan (1979) noted that innovation in education is to create or evolve something new in the school curriculum. The something new that is being created or evolved could be in respect of the goals and objectives of Education, content, learning experience, curriculum materials and evaluation.

Curriculum innovation entails the introduction of novel ideas and practices in any one parts of the curriculum. It means to review

an existing curriculum or add something new to curriculum so as to make it more relevant to the varying needs and aspirations of the learners and to the ever changing needs of the society.

The process of curriculum innovation follows some steps. The steps include identification of the area that change and their agreement on the need for change, identification of direction of change, organization of workshops, field testing and evaluation of new practices or alternatives, dissemination and adoption of the innovation and evaluation.

There are certain reasons for curriculum innovation that are often evolved. Some of the reasons include: social change or change in social order, dynamic nature of knowledge, increase in facilities that improve Teaching and learning and Research findings in respect of how learning occurs.

Curriculum innovation is important in that it provides adequate means with which educational practices can meet up their inherent diverse roles at any point in time. It is also important as it aims at having dynamic educational practices that are not at variance with the changing values and aspirations of the society in which the school exists. In addition curriculum innovation in general are directed towards improving performance of the school. System so as to be result oriented.

Subsequently, in order to achieve the goals of curriculum innovation, well trained teachers are needed to implement the curriculum. Below is presented the 9-years Basic Education Curriculum prepared by NERDC.

**Table 1.0**

| Basic Education Curriculum                   | Core compulsory subjects  | Elective subjects   |
|--|---|---|
| Lower basic Education Curriculum primary 1-3 | 1) English language<br>(2) One major Nigerian language (Hausa, Igbo Yorubah)<br>(3) Mathematics<br>(4) Basic Science and Technology<br>(5) Social Studies<br>(6) Civics Education<br>(7) Culture and Creative Art (CCA)<br>(8) Religions studies: CRK/IRK.<br>(9) Physical and Health Education(PHE)<br>(10) Computer Studies | (1) Agricultural Science<br>(2)Home Economies<br><br>NOTE:<br>Must offer 1 elective but not more than 2 |

**Table 1.1**

| Basic Education Curriculum         | Core compulsory subjects   | Elective subjects  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Middle Basic Education Primary 4-6 | 1) English Language<br>2) One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba).<br>3) Mathematics<br>4) Basic sciences and Technology.<br>5) Social Studies<br>6) Civics Education<br>7) Culture and Creative Arts (CCA)<br>8) Religious Studies (CRK/IRK.<br>9) Physical and Health Education (PHE)<br>11) French language<br>12) Computer Science | (1) Agricultural Science<br>(2) Home Economics<br>(3) Arabic Language<br><br>NOTE:<br>Must offer 1 Elective but not more than 2. |

**Table 1.2**

| Basic Education Curriculum                | Core compulsory subjects  | Elective subjects   |
|---|---|---|
| Upper basic education Curriculum (JSS1-3) | 1) English Language<br>2) One major Nigerian language (Igbo<br>3) Hausa or Yoruba<br>4) Mathematics<br>5) Basic Science & Technology<br>6) Social studied<br>7) Civic education<br>8) Culture and creative Arts (CCA)<br>9) Religious studies (CRK/IRK)<br>10) Physical & Health Education<br>11) French language<br>12) Basic Technology<br>13) Computer Science | 1) Agricultura<br>1 Science<br>2) Home Economics<br>3) Arabic studies<br><br>NOTE:<br>Must offer 1 Elective but not more than 3 |

*Source NERDC, 2007.*

The primary and junior secondary school curricular have integrated studies in integrated Science to cover the Basic sciences, social studies that draws from social Sciences as Geography economics and government and from humanities as History, and introducing technology that draws from electrical/electronics, auto mechanics. Woodwork etc. with this integration, the child can have “understanding of experience in many different ways”

**Frequently Asked Questions about UBE/ the New 9 Year Basic Education Curriculum**

- (1). Way do we need a 9-year Basic Education Curriculum?
- The present primary and junior Secondary School curriculum can no longer meet the goals of basic education.
  - The existing school curriculum can no longer meet the expected needs of the world

of work of the learners in a rapidly changing world.

- (2) How is this new basic education curriculum different from the old primary and JSS curriculum?
- There are gaps in the old curriculum which the new basic education curriculum has addressed.
  - New subjects have been introduced to replace obsolete subjects and core subjects redefined.
  - The new curriculum is for 9 years of continuous schooling.
- (3) Does it then mean that a child will remain in one school for 9 years studying the 9 year basic education curriculum?
- No
  - A child is required to successfully complete primary school before being placed in the junior secondary school.
  - What the pupil has learnt in primary six will be foundation and is connected systematically to what he or she will learn in JSS 1
- (4) What are these gaps in the old primary and junior Secondary Curriculum?
- There is a disconnect in some subjects between primary and JSS curricula in the context of the 9- year continuous basic education, schooling these includes.
  - Primary science and integrated Science
  - Introductory technology
  - The existing primary and JSS curriculum could not achieve acquisition of:
  - Entrepreneurial skills.
  - Strategic communication skills
  - Functional literacy and numeracy
  - Subject overloading
  - No support for reducing poverty, creating jobs and wealth for graduates

- In some of the subjects the curriculum content are obsolete and out of date with modern challenges.
- (5) How are these gaps filled in the 9-years Basic education curriculum?
- Restructuring the primary and JSS curricular into a continuous 9-year basic education curriculum.
  - Infusing emerging issues into the relevant contents in a systematic manner for all class levels.
  - Introduction of subjects such as Basic Science and basic technology as to replace primary Science and introductory Technology.
  - Presenting cultural and creative Arts as a holistic and integrated subjects.
  - Introducing ICT and French as core subjects.
  - Preparing core and elective subjects in order to achieve reduction in the over loading of the curriculum contents.
- (6) What is the structure of the new basic education curriculum?
- The national council on education approved a 3- level curriculum structure:
    - (i) Lower Basic Education Curriculum for primaries 1-3.
    - (ii) Middle Basic Education Curriculum for primaries 4-6.
    - (iii) Upper Basic Education Curriculum for JSS 1-3.
- (7) Does this imply that we now have lower basic school, middle basic school and upper basic school and separate curricular for these?
- No!!!
  - We still have primary school and junior secondary school as distinct entities.
  - But for the purpose of achieving the goals of the 9-year basic education schooling the basic education curriculum is broken into three components where the contents are systematically connected.
8. What is the philosophy of the 9-year basic Education Curriculum?
- Every learner who has gone through 9-years of basic education should have acquired appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life[-skill, as well as the ethical moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning; as a basic for scientific and reflective thinking.
- Challenges for Effective Implementation of UBE Programme**
- UBE scheme is a commendable programme, but it has its challenges which has made the implementation of the programme ineffective. Viz (1) Political structure of a state or country:-
- The power that be or the rulership of the states try to undermine the national policy on Education to favour their own party political programme. State authority tend to sway to the governmental in authority.
- (2) **Power:** - The problem of electricity in the country has made it difficult for the machineries in the rural area not to be functional. Even in the urban area that there is electricity the epileptic nature of the electricity has caused damages to these machines or made them non-
- (3) **Infrastructure and Equipment:** Inadequate provision of infrastructure (Classrooms) for the benefit the pupils has caused over crowding in the schools and as a result sickness and ill health are transmitted so easily making the children not to benefit from the programme.
- Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) supply books and teaching materials to both primary and secondary schools. Some school heads sell them to book sellers in the open market. Some locked

up theirs in cupboards and give them out at a price to the children.

**(4) Finance**

The Bible says that money is a defence and answereth all things. Money is needed to be able to solve some major problems in this programme. Example buying of materials, transportation etc. Most of the time when money is assigned for a particular programme. The way about of the money cannot be explained.

**(5) Insufficient Training**

Most often the instructors are not adequately trained the way they are supposed to, some are asked to learn on the job, making them to be half baked. Most of them do not have the basic knowledge to inculcate into the children but because of the Nigerian way of life “God father” they find their way into the programme. Some passed on due to the nature of the training or some natural cause and as a result will not be able to impact the knowledge to the children.

To help up date the serving teachers with TCII certificate to N.C.E, NTI Kaduna was mandated to help in this regard. To this end the special teachers upgrading programme (STUP) was put in place. Almost from inception, it was difficult for serving teachers to be part of it as relations of those that matter within the society enrolled for the programme while most serving teachers couldn't just because the STUP was free.

Under the NEEDS programme serving teachers are supposed to be retained. Again this was given to NTI and UBEC to conduct and monitor. Observation show from the retraining centers that it is the same set of teachers that come for the programme every year because they have their ‘God fathers’ at the state primary school boards who automatically include their names because of the ₦1,400 that is paid to the teachers at the end. Even at that at centers most

of the participants are not interested in the knowledge to be acquired rather they are interested in the money to be paid, so they do not take it serious. They come late, seek and obtain permission for trivial issues

**(6) Insufficient Planning**

In order to achieve the goals of UBE, sufficient planning is needed. But we notice. That right from the top there is no planning because everybody wants to fill his or her pocket. Most of the policies formulated are not well tested to make sure that they will stand the taste of the time.

**(7) Natural Disasters**

Fire outbreaks engulf buildings, class rooms or places of UBE programme, destroying the equipments and all the plans thereby making the government to start a fresh. For example during raining season in some riverine areas flood enter the school compound and destroy most of the teaching materials. E.g. books, chalk chairs and tables.

**(8) Militancy/Religious Crises**

Militancy and religious crises hinders the progress of this programme. The demands of the militant could be such that the place of the programme could be put out of use. Some religious group riots, destroying life schools and making it unavailable for use.

**Conclusion**

The write up is about the concept and challenges of the implementation of UBE programme. The UBE programme covers the first 9 years of children's education as noted in the national policy on education (2004) that primary education is referred to as the education given in an institutions for children aged 6 to 11 years. Therefore since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system

as a result the UBE programme should be supported by both governmental and non governmental organisations and give them the right impetus.

### **Recommendations**

The following points are recommended for effective implementation of UBE programme.

- (1) There should be a general policy that will be obeyed by all in spite of party political difference. The Federal Government should enact a law that will make it punishable for any that goes contrary to the effective implementation of UBE.
- (2) It is paramount that the power generation company should improve on the generation of power for the country.
- (3) There should be enough provision of classrooms so that the teacher should be able to move around to reach all. Provided facility should reach everybody.
- (4) The situation whereby children are sitting under tree, shade, should be discouraged. Ideal class rooms should be provided. Teachers students ratio should be 1:30 not 1:75 or 80 as the case may be. Dilapidated classroom blocks should also be repaired and put in use.
- (5) The federal government should adequately finance this programme. Those in charge of disbursing the funds should be monitored to make sure that the money approved get to the appropriate quarters.
- (6) Instructors/teachers should be given adequate training. Crash programme for the training of teachers should be discouraged. There should be a proper screening of teachers and instructors to be used so that

unqualified hands cannot come in to the programme to the detriment of the pupils.

- (7) Security should be beefed up around facilities for this programme to deter the activities of Militants and religious rioters

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