

REAPPRAISING UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) PROGRAMME FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Reappraising Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme for functionality and self reliance: Issues and challenges, entails in the context of this paper, the man-power needed for the entrenchment of UBE programme. This also means, finding ways for a successful UBE to function well, its products to be well trained and educated for a life long sustenance. This paper dwells on the origin, scope and objectives of UBE programme, the prospects, present state of UBE and challenges, the suggestions that could bring about improvement for the success of UBE programme and conclusion is drawn.

Introduction

Origin of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

In the process of most Nigerians mourning the apparent demise of a laudable Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, the Federal Government of Nigeria under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, re-launched the scheme on September, 1999 under a new name of Universal Basic Education (UBE). In short, Universal Basic Education is an off-shot of international collaboration and national aspiration. Such international activities include the following conferences (Achuonye, 2007):

1. Addis Ababa Conference - 1986
2. Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action on Education for all -1990 (organized under the UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank).
3. New Delhi Declaration on e.g. Countries- 1990
4. Ouagadogu Declaration on the Education of Woman and Girls -1992
5. The Rio Summit on Human Environment -1992.

6. Beijing Conference on Women and Development -1995
7. Amman Affirmation on the Pursuit of the Goals of Jomtien -1996
8. The Social Development Summit, Copenhagen -1996
9. OAU Decade of Education in Africa-1997-2006
10. Durban Statement of commitment of Inter-Africa Collaboration for the Development -1998
11. Recife (Brazil) Declaration on the Pursuit of the New Delhi Goals on the Massive Re-education of illiteracy
12. The World Conference on Population and Development, Cairo- 1998
13. The Dakar Education for All (EFA) Forum – 2000
14. The Dakar Education for All (EFA)-2006. Forum shifted the target date for attaining Basic Education for all from 2000 to 2010 and re-sets the global EFA goals such goals are translated into national aspirations in Nigeria.

Scope of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

The scope of UBE covers education at all ages of the population ranging from early childhood to the wide spectrum of formal and non-formal programmes for children, adolescents and adults in and out of schools. It is therefore, a misconception to see UBE as simply form primary one to JSS III or simply as a form of formal schooling. Rather, it embraces both formal and non-formal education and continues beyond the JSS level to adult education level.

Thus, the scopes of the UBE include the followings:

1. Programme initiatives for early childhood care and socialization.
2. Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, innumeracy and life –skills especially for adults (persons aged fifteen and above).
3. Out of school, non formal programmes for up-dating the knowledge and skills of persons who left schools before acquiring the basic need for life –long learning.
5. Special programmes for nomadic populations
6. Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths-that have not had the benefit of formal education.
7. The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the junior secondary school.

Objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

Based on the international collaboration and national aspirations, the objectives of UBE are many and include the following:

1. To develop in the entire citizenry a strong, consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. To provide free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
3. To reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved-relevance, quality and efficiency).
4. To cater 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, innumeracy,

manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethnic, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

The Prospects of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

The prospects of UBE scheme are many considering the wide spectrum of Nigerians, it will affect directly or indirectly through its laudable objectives and wide scope, if well implemented; as such, it

1. Will influence different categories of people and age group in Nigeria
2. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its promotion.
3. Reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from school
4. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, innumeracy, manipulative, communicative and life coping skills as well as ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying solid foundation for life-long learning.

The Present State of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

The present state of UBE so far is that the Federal Government has made some reasonable financial input to UBE programme particularly in the construction of infrastructural areas like the construction of classrooms, offices, stores and toilets in some primary schools across the nation. With the help of foreign assistance from world Bank, United State Agency for International Development (USAID), and the use petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) recently, some resources and materials have been produced; organized training and retraining programmes for teachers. the exercise for training of teachers was restricted to the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna and the project was called pivotal Teachers training programme (PTTP). Also UBE

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Technical Assistance Team under the auspices of the British Council has retrained staff of National project Coordination Unit (PCU) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Furthermore, Nation Teachers Institute organized re-training programme for in-services teachers in 2006, in form of a training workshop focused on; innovative technique of teaching the four core subjects (English Language, mathematics, Science and Social Studies) in school, based assessment and improvisation of instruction materials (NTI, 2006).

Other areas which the Federal Government has made financial input to UBE are curriculum review, provision of vehicles and boats for monitoring purposes and the like.

To crown it all, the passing of the UBE bill and the subsequent presidential assent to the Bill on the 28th of May, 2004, was another landmark achievement by the Federal Government to give the programme legal backing. Consequent upon the passing of the bill, both the state and local governments have been trying in their little way, by supplementing federal government contributions to make UBE functional and qualitative.

The Issues and Challenges of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

In spite of the remarkable output of both the Federal Government, State and Local Government for the progress of UBE scheme, it is still faced with some obstacles. In the introduction, it is said the UBE is an off-shot of the UPE with wider scope and objectives. As such, most of such problems that hampered the functional, progress and quality of UPE are the very ones that are obstacles to UBE.

These are; lack of political will and general instability, poor integration and partnership, inadequate funding, shortage of teachers, operational issues, inadequate publicity, inadequate planning. Having listed or

outlined the challenges, we can now briefly expatiate on each of them thus:

Inadequate Planning

Poor planning is like a general issue touching all aspects of the scheme (Achuonye, 2007). This manifests as the general lukewarmness, lack of enthusiasm to pursue in national programme, unreliability of data available and failure to carry the people along.

The outcome of all these is mainly poor quality and quantity inputs such as inadequate staff, poor grading facilities for personnel, poor infrastructure, inadequate materials and negative impact on access, retention, efficiency and quality (Obanya, 2000). Other issues include: inadequate funding, over centralization of supervision, irregular payment of teacher's salaries like what is now obtained with the present set of teachers that are recruited and sent on inter-state postings, for over eight months now, some lucky ones have just received their first five months arrears, yet to be paid the three months.

Conclusion

Reappraising Universal Basic education (UBE) programme in Nigeria for functionality and self reliance: issues and challenges is an interesting topic that intends to help the citizenry in particular and the government to make the UBE programme more effective. Thus, more personnel should be trained and retrained from time to time. As such the presenter of this paper is optimistic that the society will gain a lot from this text. Thus, through the implementation of these suggestions, the future of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is very bright.

Suggestions that Could Bring About Successful Development for Realization of UBE Programme.

For successful objectives of UBE programme to be achieved, in the 21st century,

the following suggestions need to be granted assiduity.

- There is need to adopt more effective and adequate publicity, mostly at the local levels, using the local languages for television and radio jingles and opens air teaching.
- Distribute funds to the other tiers of the government and establish active monitoring teams to ensure accountability.
- Adequately address the operational issues to clear off confusion and unnecessary power on who controls the UBE programme between the State Primary Education Board (SPEB) or State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the State Secondary Education Board (SSEB).
- Recruit more teachers, improve working conditions to reduce brain drain of science and technical teachers into industries.
- Evolve a comprehensive integration and partnership policy among the different tiers of government and well defined implementation strategy that would involve all interest groups-states, local government, communities, NGOs, private individuals, such that mistrust and confusion would be checked. For instance, communities should be encouraged to engage in building projects for UBE scheme in their areas, states should also be encouraged to pay counterpart funds, while private sectors could be motivated to liaise with PTA to support government effort in running the school in terms of infrastructural development.
- Most developed post-primary school have facilities like classrooms, libraries and laboratories that are lying waste. UBE junior secondary should be allowed to take up in these schools instead of starting afresh in primary schools. It is rather ruin

the primary schools JSS students since qualified teachers are not there.

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