

UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION FOR JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper looks at the objective and scope of Universal Basic Education in relation to job creation and sustainable national development in Nigeria. The UBE programme has been a noble and laudable scheme for Federal Government of Nigeria, which all Nigerians have embraced. President Olusegun Obasanjo in Adamaechi and Romaine (2000) stated that, education as a factor of production produces the attitudes, skills, knowledge and personalities upon which modern technology, industrialization and sustainable development depend. This paper highlighted the concept of UBE programme for job creation and development, its problems and prospect in Nigeria. Recommendations were made.

Introduction

Education is the greatest force that can be used to bring about change in any society. It is also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, social and human resources. It was in realization of this that a National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated for the country. The policy seeks the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in understanding of the world around; and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

According to Oguche (2002), basic education 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 educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy. In Nigerian context, basic education includes primary, junior secondary and nomadic education as well as adult literacy.

Other efforts made towards educational development came from the world conference declaration Thailand in 1990 to which Nigeria was a signatory with a host of other nations (about 155 in all). This declaration emphasizes on the need for all to have basic and useful education. A similar declaration known as "New Delhi Declaration of 1993" which pledged basic education for all by the year 2000 further added impetus to Nigeria's reaction towards the realization of providing basic education for all by the year 2000.

No nation can achieve any meaningful development without developing its material and human resources because relevant manpower is needed to harness and utilize mineral and other resources for development. It is in recognition of this fact that the UBE programme was conceptualized with the following objectives:

- i. to develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education;
- ii. to provide free basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
- iii. to drastically reduce the rate of drop-outs from the school system;
- iv. to cater for the learning needs of young persons who interrupted their school through complementary approaches to provision of basic education;
- v. to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy. Innumeracy, moral and civic values needed for a solid foundation for lifelong learning (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004).

In order to achieve the above stated objectives, and create job to sustain development in Nigeria, the Federal Government further stated that she shall provide free, compulsory primary, secondary, university and adult literacy education programmes when practicable. The objective of this paper is to examine the challenges of job creation through the UBE programme in sustaining national development in Nigeria.

The Concept of Universal Basic Education

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was formally launched in Kangiwa Square, Sokoto on September 30, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. According to Elaigwu (2000), the UBE programme is an expression of the strong desire of Obasanjo's administration to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizens.

Nigeria is a signatory to the 1990 Jomitem Declaration of Education for All By the year 2000 and also a member of the Group E-9 nations committed to the total eradication of illiteracy. In line with the above, the Federal Government intends the UBE to be inclusive, and this would encompass early childhood care and socialization, functional literacy, nomadic education, and programmes for persons who left school before acquiring basic education as well as apprenticeship training for youth and adolescent outside the formal school system; and formal education from primary school to junior secondary school. Hence the junior secondary school certificate is the standard for basic education in Nigeria although provision is made for persons outside the formal school system. Oguche (2002). This UBE programme, according to Adamaechi and Romaine (2000), was a practical demonstration by the Federal Government's resolution to halt the gradual but shocking drifting of the country into a glorious past of dangerous illiteracy but bring about national development.

The Concept of National Development

Development comes from the word develop which means among others to bring something to a more advanced or more highly organized state. Microsoft Encarta (2006) define development as the process of changing and becoming larger, stronger, or more impressive, successful, or advanced, or of causing somebody or something to change in this way. According to Adeyanju (2006) development denotes a process of progressive changes from simple to the more complex with increasing capacity to function effectively in all interdependent sectors of whole system – the social, economic, political, cultural and technological sectors operating together. Nwana (1996) says that development is the harnessing of available resources by a people for the realization of their major objectives, solving their major articulated problems without deliberately creating new problems situations. Development can also be defined in the sense of an objective or a desire state of affairs of a nation. As for Osasona (1996) national development is the sum total of all the process by which a nation is transformed from primitive to contemporary civilization. Ejiogu (2001) therefore listed the indices of national development as:

- ✓ Health and buoyant economy;
- ✓ Individual freedom and liberty;
- ✓ Availability and affordability of essential goods and services;
- ✓ High GDP and income per capita;
- ✓ Stable polity;
- ✓ Food security;
- ✓ Functional quantitative educational system;
- ✓ Viable employment opportunities;
- ✓ Respect and recognition in the comity of nations; and
- ✓ Well fed population

Since the achievement of a developed status involves viable employment opportunities, the Universal Basic Education for job creation and sustainable national development in Nigeria is no

Universal Basic Education For Job Creation And Sustainable National Development In Nigeria

longer doubtful. We are living in a world where universal basic education has become an integral part of the world's culture. Therefore, national development is a continuous improvement of the material and human resources of the citizens. It is a kind of development that will ensure equal distribution of essential social services, economic activities and industrial establishment to all the corners of the country without ethnic bias. As Layout (1988) once observed, the prosperity of a country depends not on the substance of its revenues, nor in strength of its fortifications but in the number of its cultivated citizens, its men of education, enlightenment and character.

From the foregoing UBE can be seen as the bedrock of Nigeria job creation and sustainable national development be it technological, political, economic, scientific or otherwise.

UBE as Job Creator and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

According to Adamaechi and Romaine (2000), education is not just an end in itself, but an investment and a means to an end. They further maintained that education is not an investment on human capital, but also a pre-requisite as well as a correlate for national development. Education is an integral part of a total culture hence most reformers use it as an instrument for social development and cultural regeneration. In short, many governments have used education to forge national unity, hence programmes such as National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was introduced in 1973 by Gen. Gowon's administration, as well as Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976. All these programmes are meant to bring about job creation and sustainable national development in Nigeria. Thus the UBE scheme will produce a new breed of Nigerians that will be self-employed and self-reliant.

The programme, UBE, calls for enriched curricula that will lay a foundation for lifelong learning; inculcate appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy, as well as developing an aptitude for practical work. According to Federal Ministry of Education (2000), UBE offers a great opportunity to Nigerians to confront the challenges of and to take full advantages of the possibilities offered by new information and communication technologies for according to the implementation guidelines for UBE by the FME (2000), a media dimension will be an integral UBE. The UBE programme will equally call for value re-orientation in favour of education and for the long-term benefits that confers both to the individual and to the society. This therefore ensures job creation and sustainable national development.

In fact, the importance of UBE as an instrument of nation building and job creation has been argued and emphasized from time immemorial. According to Smith in Adamaechi and Romaine (2000), "a state spending to educate its citizens is a form of investment". Adamaechi and Romaine (2000) also quoted Stuart who argued in the 19th century that it was in the interest of the general public that everyone should have at least primary education and it must be provided by the government. Adamaechi and co equally quoted Marx who argued from a socialist point of view that "education is a major part of the social revolution". Awo in Adamaechi and Romaine (2000) asserted that if Nigerians want to develop and live in peace, free education at all levels must be provided for all the citizens.

Problems of UBE for Job Creation and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Despite the laudable aims and objectives outlined by the UBE programme, there are some obvious problems militating against its successful job creation. These include:

- ▶ Lack of trained personnel to translate theory into practice.
- ▶ Lack of enough fund for the UBE programme.
- ▶ Inadequate infrastructure
- ▶ Lack of professional teachers to teach in our UBE schools.
- ▶ Lack of proper supervision and monitoring to ensure proper teaching by teachers and utilization of money given out for effective implementation of the UBE programme.
- ▶ Problem of inter-governmental and inter-ministerial inertia and resistance.

- ▶ Problem of large scale and systematic corruption.
- ▶ Lack of effective management of UBE programmes generally and innovative programmes particularly.
- ▶ Lack of incentive scheme for personnel employed. Sheidu (1993)

Recommendations

1. **Funding:** The Federal Government should make enough money available to the planners to enable them execute what they have planned. And such money should be monitored to ensure its proper and effective utilization.
2. Reformation of school curriculum: There is a need to formulate the present school curriculum in such a way that they will have a solid foundation for learner's growth towards the expected ideal man. Adamaechi and Romaine (2000) believed that once the learner is introduced to an appropriate curriculum designed for a human educational and self development system by a well oriented teacher, the foundation for growth and development of the learner to approximate personally has been laid.
3. Initiators of innovative programmes in Nigeria must lead by example and in fighting corruption in the implementation of the UBE programmes. Education funds must of necessity be left in the hands of the administrative management for transparent, honest and accountability.
4. Initiators of innovative programmes and their dedicated managers should not take for granted the cooperation or assistance from other donor agencies expected to assist them in the implementation of their programme.
5. More teachers and inspectors should be employed with sufficient clout to enable them exercise authority on the UBE pupils.
6. School counselors should be employed for our UBE programmes.
7. Efforts should be made to encourage the teachers employed to go for in-service training in teaching method and to update their knowledge in the concept, philosophy and methodology and evaluation of the UBE programme aims and objectives.
8. There should be a special incentive scheme for personnel involved in UBE programme implementation to reduce fear of uncertainty of the future due mainly to short life-span of project.
9. Remuneration: The teachers who are the direct implementation agents of UBE programme should be well treated and remunerated. There should be improvement in the condition of service of teacher such as provision of in-service training scheme, special salary scales, as well as ensuring steady workshops/conferences to up-date their knowledge.

In addition, all those concerned with the execution of the programme such as teachers, administrators, parents as well as politicians should be deeply involved in the planning and implementation of the UBE programme.

Conclusion

Universal Basic Education should be a reality that is perceived and structured differently by the various actors according to their specific contexts and historical circumstances all in the context of job creation and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Changes in education programmes often come about when the current practices are challenged and questions are being asked about the way things are done, (Adamu, 2001). Changes however do not normally come about just because someone decides for a change. There must be event which informs that change in the educational programme of a country. (Adamu, 2001). The cultural, historical ideological and religious beliefs of the people must be taken into account in forming an accurate view of universal basic education for job creation and national development in Nigeria.

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Buari, Nasiru Adeyemi

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