

---

# INADEQUACIES OF NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

## CONTENTS: THE WAY FORWARD

---

By

**Levi Doe Kalagbor, Ph.D.**

*Department of Educational Foundation & Management,  
Faculty of Education,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,  
Rumuolumeni – Port Harcourt.*

and

**DR. (MRS.) H. N. L. Nwankwoala**

*Department of Educational Foundation & Management,  
Faculty of Education,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,  
Rumuolumeni – Port Harcourt.*

### **Abstract**

*This paper examined the programme content of the Universal Primary Education Programme, the 6-3-3-4 educational programme and those of the Universal Basic Education with a view to identifying their respective inadequacies which had posed various challenges in the expected societal development. Through content analysis, the paper expressed that innovation formed the fundamental essence for the various changes witnessed in Nigeria education: the need to critically address challenges of the society for sustainable development. However, the paper did not establish significant innovation in the programme contents of the respective educational policies, and method of implementation. Rather challenges associated with grassroots mobilization, teacher quality and quantity, poor funding, poor infrastructural facilities and pupil's enrolment, etc were still identified as variables that affected the achievement of the desired educational objectives of these respective educational systems' programme contents. The paper blamed these challenges on the entrenchment of new educational system without reasonably and successfully implementing*

## *Academic Excellence*

---

*the programme content of the former. It was on this premise that the paper recommended among others, the need for sustainable and proactive 'Will Power' on the part of educational policy executives towards making the present U.B.E. programme achieve the desired purpose.*

Education is one of the vital instruments in development: an instrument for social mobility, per excellence for effecting national growth and productivity and a dynamic instrument for change. No nation can develop beyond the progress and capacity made in education. In other words, the development of a nation is always influenced by her educational system.

In view of the above truism, Nigeria, since independence, had introduced different educational policies which had also informed the fundamental aspect of her system of education. After independence in 1960 and the subsequent civil war (1966-1970), the Nigeria educational systems have had several innovations before the Universal Basic Education came into being.

For instance, the 7-5-4 system perceived to contain some colonial biases and meant to serve the interest of the colonial masters, not the needs and aspirations of Nigeria, was replaced with the Universal Primary Education (UPE): 6-5-2-5 system in 1976. In 1982, the 6-3-3-4 scheme was introduced to replace the UPE scheme, and in the year 2000, the 6-3-3-4 was replaced with the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE): 9-6-4 system.

The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the Universal Primary Education (UPE), the 6-3-3-4 scheme and the Universal Basic Education programme with a view to identifying the related challenges of these policies and suggesting way-forward to ensure that every Nigeria youth on graduation is sufficiently equipped with sufficient ability, and capacity to develop himself and the society.

### **The University Primary Education (UPE)**

In a bid to equalize educational opportunities in Nigeria, the Federal Military Government launched the Universal Primary Education on September 6 1976 (Nwafor, 2009).

### **The Programme of the UPE**

The cardinal currency of this system that replaced 7-5-4 educational system was its content of free and universal education which had to be compulsory, and was targeted at equal education opportunities irrespective of political, religious, or ethnic socio-economic background. However, the rationale of the contents was to improve the overall school enrolment nation-wide and to redress the educational imbalance among sections of the country. The commitment of the Federal Government to the ideal and principle of establishing a just and egalitarian society is very notable to the philosophy which underline the UPE programme (Ogbonda, 2006).

To actualize the above objectives, the Federal Government of Nigeria required additional teachers in 1976. Hence Nwagwu (1976) put it thus: as an emergency measure, the Federal Government established 156 Teachers Training Colleges: Teacher Training Colleges and Colleges of Education were made tuition free. In addition, teachers' trainers were recruited from India, Britain as well as other African Countries (Ogbonda, 2006). The Federal Government also set up at Kaduna a National Teachers Institute (NTI) whose objective is the introduction of a continuous teacher education.

### **Planning/Implementation Issues of the Universal Primary Education (UPE)**

Taiwo, in Ogbonda (2006) classified that the UPE, is a great contribution to education in Africa and of immense benefit to Nigeria in mobilizing its human resources, adjusting its educational imbalance and providing for the Nigeria children equal access to education. In spite of these assessments, the UPE had some major setbacks, namely:

- a. Grassroots mobilization was inadequate particularly from the period the programme was planned to the stage of implementation. Major stakeholders: i.e. parents, teachers and educational managers etc were not integrated in the fashioning of the programme, hence it was difficult to reasonably educate the people on the principles for the system.
- b. Due to inadequate planning, the estimated pupils' enrolment figure was significantly less than actual number of registered pupils. This gave room to statistical problem which posed a threat to classroom situation and other forms of infrastructural facilities.
- c. The issue of teacher quality and quantity was not tackled prior to the launching of the programme in 1976 and its subsequent implementation.
- d. The documents which defined the operation of the UPE programme, specifically, the curriculum contents were not published in 1976 but in 1977, one year after the commencement of the UPE programme. The National Implementation and Monitoring Committee was set up in 1978. In other words, there was no proper legislation that backed up the scheme.

- e. Also, upon implementation, the scheme was poorly funded.

### **The 6-3-3-4 Educational System**

In 1982, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced into the country's educational system the 6-3-3-4 educational programme. The 6-3-3-4 policy was aimed at making education more relevant to the needs of the individual in the Nigeria society

The programme of the 6-3-3-4 system as an innovation, means: 6 years of primary school education, 3years of junior secondary school education, 3 years of senior secondary education and 4 years of university education. The philosophy of the 6-3-3-4 educational system was based on the integration of the individuals into sound and effective citizens, and equal educational opportunities for all Nigerians at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. Nevertheless, the system was aimed at correcting the defects, gaps, loopholes and lopsidedness in the former UPE scheme by providing vocational education in the first level of secondary education. The issue here centered on the fact that the new system was aimed to redirect the Nigerian educational curriculum contents and practices from academic bias to more practical perspective (Kalagbor 2010).

### **Planning /Implementation Issues of the 6-3-3-4 System**

- a. Paucity in physical facilities and gross inadequate instructional materials.
- b. Inadequate funding, occasioned by government lack of will power to finance the capital-intensive nature of the programme
- c. Delay in proper legislation to back-up the scheme which also necessitated the refusal to implement the programme in 1982 by some states.
- d. Shortage of qualified manpower (teachers) to manipulate the technologies involved in the system. Teachers' education in relevant aspects of the system was not emphasized neither were seminars/workshops on capacity building given priority attention.

### **The Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE)**

The Universal Basic Education was legally introduced through the UBE. Act of 2004 with one of its integral objectives in section 5.1 (1): the provision of free, compulsory education for every Nigeria - child of primary and junior secondary school age. The UBE, apart from being another huge national development enterprise was a response to one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education for all by 2015, and a strong evidence of Nigeria's commitment to different international conventions in 1990, 1991, 1997 and 1998 respectively, on the promotion of basic education.

### *Inadequacies of Nigeria...*

---

Some internal indices may have also necessitated the need for Nigeria government adoption of the UBE programmes. According to Babalola (2000), literacy rate in Nigeria was 52% in 1998. The UNICEF State of the World's Children Report for 1999 in Dike (2001) pointed out that 4 million Nigerian children have no access to basic education. Also the proportion of poor people in Nigeria rose from 29.1% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1996 (Owhonda, in Kalagbor 2010). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is therefore a "child of those dismal statistics".

### **The Programme of Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

It has basic education and universal contents, hence, in its inclusive sense, the basic education provides:

- a. education programme for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy, and life-skills, especially for adults.
- b. special programmes for nomadic populations.
- c. programme initiative for early childhood care and socialization.
- d. non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths who have not had the benefits of formal education; etc.

The universal contents include, inclusiveness, implying that persons of all manners and conditions of physical, spatial and psychological existence will benefit from the programme.

### **Planning/ Implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

- i. Funding: Free, compulsory education which is the essential ingredient of the UBE connotes that children while undergoing schooling process (primary to junior secondary levels) would not be made to pay any form of fees and that materials essential to learning will be adequately distributed to pupils free. Infrastructural facilities, particularly classrooms, laboratories, workshops among others shall be qualitative and reasonably adequate. But, to a large extent these were hampered by poor funding by the government (Kalagbor, 2010).
- ii. Teacher supply and pupil's enrolment: The statistics from the Rivers State Ministry of Education (2008) reveal an enrolment of 445, 730 and teacher supply of 8,045, culminating in a pupil ÷ teacher ratio of 53 – 1 in 1,045 primary schools in 2005/2006 session. In 2007/2008 enrolment was 490,967 and teacher supply of 9,128 representing pupil teacher ratio of 54 - 1 in 1,048 primary schools. The implication here is that school enrolment; teacher supply and number of schools have been on the increase every session and presents a problem.

## ***Academic Excellence***

---

The above is applicable to other states of the federation: Edo state has teacher-students' ratio of 1:180 (Enogholase, 2008); Ajibola (2008) reported that an average classroom in the primary and junior secondary school in Nigeria contain 70 to 120 pupils/students while Igwe (2004) had earlier identified that about 87% of primary school classrooms in Nigeria are overcrowded.

### **Conclusion**

In this write-up, the post-independence educational innovations in Nigeria, specifically the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of 1976; the 6-3-3-4 technology/vocational system of 1982 and the current Universal Basic Education (UBE) i.e. the 9-6-4 system established by UBE. Act of 2004 have been re-examined. The challenges which crippled the Universal Primary Education (UPE) were transferred on the 6-3-3-4 system and still manifest in the current UBE programme. Most importantly were the challenges of poor planning and implementation in the areas of poor statistical data, recruitment of non-professional teachers, funding pattern, insufficient infrastructural facilities and lack of will power to implement the programme contents of these innovations.

However, it is imperative therefore, that policy planners and implementers be innovative both in methodology and behaviour, ideas and practices. This invariably would mean a declaration of a state of emergency on education in the country (Nigeria).

### **The Way-Forward**

In the view of Maduewesi (2005), poor planning and implementation were the factors that had militated against the success of the various educational programmes in Nigeria. Ajayi (2007) and Ajibola (2008) itemized that these innovations failed to have appreciable and significant impact in Nigeria for the reason of poor implementation: ranging from shortage of funds, lack of quality teachers, paucity of textbooks and other teaching learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, to un-uniform practices and take-off and unavailability of curriculum design for the purpose.

Succinctly, for any programme to achieve a significant success, there must be adequate financial backing, and stake holders in education must be reasonably consulted and their inputs considered in policy making and implementation. This will even take care of mobilization of the people in the perspective of educating them on the intricacies of the new educational system. Also, the need and relevance of proper data collection for the purpose of proper statistics of the pupils and infrastructure is imperative.

### *Inadequacies of Nigeria...*

The government should have the courage and political will to implement 26% budget allocation to education sector as recommended by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and timely release of same. Nevertheless, several researches have shown that the participation of individuals, private sector, and the three tiers of government was found to be the best option for funding and managing educational system. Coombs (1970) observed that, money is absolutely a crucial input of any educational system. It provides the essential purchasing power with which education acquires its human and physical inputs. With too little money, education can be helpless.

### **References**

- Ajayi, T.A. (2007). Achieving universal basic education (UBE) in Nigeria: Strategies for improved funding and cost effectiveness in the social science. *Medwell Journals 2* (3): 342-346.
- Ajibola, M. A. (2008). Innovations, curriculum development for basic education in Nigeria: Policy priorities and challenges of practice and implementation. *Journal of International Studies*, issues 8.
- Babalola, J. B. (2000). *Blue print for the management of the UBE at secondary school level*. Paper presented at the national workshop on effective school management and challenges of conducting school examination in Nigeria, organized by ANCOPSS, March.
- Coombs P. H. (1970). *The world educational crisis: a systems analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dike, V. (2008). *The state of education in Nigeria and the health of the nation*. Retrieved 1 5/08/09 from [www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/edn/10204234737.htm](http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/edn/10204234737.htm).
- Enogholase, G. (2000). Nigeria: *Edo teachers want basic education commissioner sacked*. Retrieved July 28, 2008 from <http://allAfrican-Com/stories/2008060358.htm>
- Igwe, S. O. (2004). The universal basic education (UBE) programme in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects in Fagbamiye, E .O; Babalola, J. B. Fabu, M and

*Academic Excellence*

---

Ayeni, A. O. (Eds). *Management of primary and secondary education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NAEAP.

Kalagbor, L. D. (2010). Managing free, compulsory education content of universal basic education in Nigeria: The salient issues. *Journal of the Faculty of education, Rivers State University of education*.52.61,

Maduewesi, E. J. (2005). Universal Basic Education; Issues. Problems and Prospects in *Benchmarks and global trends in education*. Benin City Dasylya Influence enterprise,

Nwafor, N. H. A. (2009). *An introduction to history of education*. Port Harcourt: Dot Solution X.

Nwangwu, N. A. (1976). *UPE. Issues, prospects and problems*. Benin City. Ethiope Publishing Corporation.