

IMPEDIMENTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In Nigeria, there are some major impediments, which have crept into the Implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme (U.B.E) since its inception in September 30, 1999, by the present Obasanjo's Administration. Therefore, this paper has recognized some impediments like insufficient funding, lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation, irregular payment of salaries to teaching and non-teaching staff involved in the programme, the epileptic supply of electricity, lack of basic infrastructures and instructional materials for a conducive teaching and learning environment. In this regard, the paper recommends that adequate and purposeful funding, leadership by example, elimination of corruption from national life, installing a good quality electricity supply, including others, will help to reduce the impediments that stand against the full implementation of U.B.E in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria is a signatory to many international education Conventions, and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is one of them as follows:

- (a) World Conference on Education for all (WCEFA), Jomtiem, Thailand - 1990.
- (b) Delhi Declaration on E-9 countries - 1991.
- (c) Sixth Conference of African Ministries of Education, Dakar- 1991.
- (d) Ouagadougou Conference on the Education of Girls and Women - 1982.
- (e) The Seventh Conference of African Ministries of Education, Durban - 1998.
- (f) The O.A.U. Decade of Education in African States- 1997-2000.
- (g) Dakar world Forum on Education for All April, 2000,

In this regard, the Basic Education Programme (U.B.E.), was launched in Sokoto on the 30th of September, 1999, by President Olusegun Obasanjo in order to actualize the above named international education covenants. This is the reason why UBE is not the conception of Obasanjo Administration but it is only putting into fruition what Nigeria has signed which should be implemented in the educationally backward nations of the world. Hence, the Jomtiem Declaration and framework for Action in 1990 gave prominence to access, retention, success, efficiency, quality and equity. It is against this background that the U.B.E. is regarded as a programme met to provide free, compulsory and qualitative education for primary to Junior Secondary School Pupils between the age of 6 and 15 years.

Above all, the Universal Basic Education programme is also an expression of the strong desire of the Federal Government of Nigeria to reinforce democratic values and participation in governance by increasing the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry. Arisi (2003:306), stressed that the UBE is a programme that is intended as a visible evidence of Nigeria's strong commitment to the Jomtiem Declaration of 1990, on the promotion of basic "education for all," as well as to the New Delhi Declaration of 1991, which requires stringent efforts by the E-9 countries (nine nations of the world's largest concentration of illiterate adults), to reduce drastically illiteracy within the shortest possible time frame. All the international education conventions were to make basic education the bedrock for sustainable and enviable economic development of the educationally backward nations and the world in general.

Objectives and Scope of UBE in Nigeria

The UBE in Nigeria is in response to the Jomtiem Declaration on "Education for All" with the following objectives:

- (a) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- (b) The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- (c) Reducing drastically the incidence of dropouts from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).

- (d) Catering 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.
- (e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civil values needed for laying a solid foundation for life long learning.

In this vein, Tahir (2002:282) opined that the UBE programme in Nigeria covers the following areas:

- (a) Programmes and initiatives for early childhood care and socialization;
- (b) Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above);
- (c) Special programmes for nomadic population.
- (d) Out-of-school non-formal programmes for up-dating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life — long learning;
- (e) Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths who have not had the benefit of formal education; and
- (f) The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the Junior Secondary School. Also, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), stipulated the main contents of the Nigerian National Policy on Education, which rests solely on the five main national objectives for national development. They are:
 - (a) A free and democratic society;
 - (b) A just and egalitarian society;
 - (c) A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
 - (d) A great and dynamic economy; and
 - (e) A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

In this regard, Abosede (2003:14) opined that the national objectives stated above are the criteria against which any development efforts can be assessed and evaluated. Ashipu (2003), added that basic education is aimed at equipping individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of the society and derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society and be able to discharge their civil responsibilities. Hence, the key objective of the UBE is that of preparing most children for life, giving them the opportunity for development of high-level manpower that is required for social and economic progress of the country.

Impediments to the Implementation of UBE in Nigerian Schools

From Nigeria's current political and democratic scene, there are basic inherent impediments, which are posing as cankerworms against the full achievement of UBE Objectives and goals. They are so practical that they leave one to be in doubt whether the laudable programme will ever meet the demands of the citizens. Hence, White (1994), in Idehen and Izevbigie (2000:192), stated that the implementation stage of any educational programme contends with practical obstacles, which may make impossible the actualization of intended goals and objectives. They posited that shortage of teachers' absence of suitable textbooks, absence of necessary equipment, insufficient funds, poor organizational abilities including monitoring may adversely affect the successful implementation of the UBE programme.

Therefore, the following problems have been recognized by this paper.

Insufficient Funding

Ehiamentalor (2000:241), Idehen and Izevbigie (2000:195), have stressed that funds are required to prosecute programmes so as to ensure smooth operations of the UBE programme. Unfortunately, various tiers of Nigerian government have failed to allocate handsome funds to make it successful. Even when funds are allocated, they are either diverted to elephant projects or embezzled out rightly. A very good example is the building of the National Stadium at Abuja, which gulped almost one hundred billion naira and was fully paid. Whereas, the UBE programme witnessed cases of irregular payment of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Lack of Adequate Monitoring and Evaluation

Saurayi (2000:390) stated that monitoring and evaluation are concepts that refer to the systematic process of determining the extent to which specific objectives of the UBE programme are being achieved. Hence, through effective monitoring and evaluation of the UBE, government can easily obtain data, which will reveal the extent of success or failure towards the attainment of targets. In this vein, there has been a shortfall meeting this goal. Many states in Nigeria are lagging behind in the full implementation and this is the reason why the Federal Government has not achieved the target of 2005/2006 for full implementation at the primary school stage, not to talk of the Junior Secondary that was initially targeted for 2008/2009.

Irregular Payment of Salaries

This is very common in many States of the Federation. It has gradually crept into the implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria especially as state governments have been in control of paying teachers' salaries since 2002. Before this time, the Federal Government used to pay teaching and non-teaching staff their salaries but this was changed due to a court ruling at Abuja in May, 2002 that payment of teachers salaries should be responsibility of State Governments. This is the reason why there are delays in paying both teaching and non-teaching staff salaries, and it has greatly hindered the implementation of the UBE programme.

Epileptic Supply of Electricity

This is a great setback to UBE programme, as many equipment needed for introductory technology cannot be made functional. Nigeria's electricity supply have been very low rendering many electricity - driven equipment to lie idle. Electricity supply has greatly affected the slow pace of developmental endeavours among the citizens and has even discouraged foreign investors to patronize the economy. In this situation, many private schools have resorted to the purchase of generators so as to be able to operate some simple equipment while government owned public schools; do not have such generators because government could not fund the purchases.

Lack of Infrastructures

Infrastructures and facilities can be seen as factors that enhance teaching and learning in Nigerian schools. They include buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, tables/desks, play grounds and computer systems. These are certainly lacking in Nigerian schools for UBE programme to fully take place. In the real sense, UBE programme, is supposed to be a matter of priority by considering existing structures and facilities vis-a vis the anticipated enrolment and personnel.

Corruption

Nigerians have imbibed corruption in all forms as income supplement to their salaries. This has become a cankerworm in all facets of Nigeria's economy hence nothing seems to work for the general good. Forms of corruption such as money laundering, out right embezzlement of funds, inflated contract sums, abandonment of projects and the like, have become common ways of "getting rich quick" by the people. This system is creating a social menace to developmental efforts. Ejiofor (2006:10), opined that corruption among politicians is a negative phenomenon and that if not checked, nothing will work for the masses in Nigeria. This has affected the UBE programme.

The Way Forward

The way forward to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigerian Schools are as follows:

Adequate Funding:- For the programme to succeed, the Federal Government should provide regular and purposeful funds at regular intervals. This means that there should be no delays between last provision of funds and the next one. Therefore, for UBE to succeed, government should supply adequate funds to the various agencies that are responsible for it and this should be a joint responsibility between the Federal, States and Local Governments.

Leadership By Example And Accountability:- These ingredients which are very important for the attainment of goals should be imbibed by our politicians, administrators, non-governmental practitioner, teachers among others. Leadership by example means that there should be selfless service to the benefit of the general good in sacrifice to self-interest. Many highly placed Nigerians are self-centred, hence they

perpetrate self-aggrandizement, looting of treasury, trading in contraband and counterfeit goods, engaging in ritual killings, rigging of elections, among others. This self-centredness must be sacrificed in order to be accountable in truth and actual service to the people.

Elimination of Corruption:- As said earlier, corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria and it is contributing to non-realization of our developmental efforts and the implementation of U.B.E. Nigerians must eliminate this cankerworm if the country is to move forward. They should say "No" to corruption because there are too many alarming stories of fraud, money laundering, over invoicing of contracts and supplies among others. No foreigner can do this for Nigeria apart from Nigerians themselves.

Installation of Good Electricity Supply:- The Federation should put in place a smooth and regular electricity supply system so as to boost education, real industrial take - off including the actualization of self-reliance in all aspects of economic endeavours of Nigerians. To achieve this goal, government should select good personnel through organized interviews to fill the various technical positions in agencies, appointed for power distribution. The present practice of employing personnel through the back door should be discouraged as the most competent ones would be sidelined.

Adequate Monitoring:- The Government as well as non-governmental organizations should set up effective monitoring and evaluation at regular intervals. This would ensure quality assurance in order to maintain a professional standard.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to look into some impediments, which stand against the implementation of Universal basic education programme in Nigerian schools at both primary and Junior Secondary Schools. If well implemented, the programme will enhance literacy and national development where every citizen would be gainfully employed.

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