

ENHANCING THE SUCCESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UBE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

According to the declaration of human rights, everyone has rights to education. Education at fundamental stage should be free, universal and compulsory. It should be directed to the full development of individual members of the society, illiteracy is a great enemy of human society that the whole countries in the world including Nigeria is trying to eradicate for better future development of all aspects of human and societal development. Many countries, Nigeria inclusive were not able to achieve EFA by the 2000 despite efforts and fund committed to ensure that all are educated. Many Nigerian children still remain out of school.

Introduction

The world declaration on Education For All (EFA), in Jomtien, Thailand 1990, refers to Basic Education as a whole range of educational activities that take place in different settings and aimed to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults. UNESCO (1998:26), in the year 2000 assessment (Technical guidelines), explained the basic learning needs to comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning contents (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to survive, to develop their capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.

The international communities, Nigeria inclusive, have realized that basic education is both a necessity and a fundamental human right that is not to be held with laxity and that which Nigeria in particular should be committed to. Nigeria, as a nation and through any instrument possible and at its disposal has adopted without any discrimination the declaration of EFA, to ensure that every person -4 child, youth and adult benefit from educational opportunities to meet the basic learning needs of its citizens. The framework for action on the EFA, also calls upon all countries to adopt policies and-practices that will ensure universal access to, and completion of primary education or whatever level' considered as "basic" by the year 2000, it is now 2006, implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria, is yet to meet such basic need for education.

Concept of Universal Basic Education

Akinkugbe (1997:10), cited article 26 of the 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit... education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality.

Attempts were made by number of countries world over as well as UNESCO to eradicate illiteracy especially in the developing nations of the world including Nigeria. Need to eradicate illiteracy gave rise to the world conference on education for all held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, and education for all summit on "Nine high population countries including Nigeria held in New Delhi, in December, 1993". The conference as well as the summit contributed in no small measure to the updating, redefining and revising of the national policies on education of number of countries in-the world.

In Peru, the Peruvian constitution of 1993 extended compulsory and free education from primary to secondary levels, it also proposed changes in the educational system and extended the duration down word by one year to include initial education for 5 years old children and shortened secondary education from five to four years and made the overall duration of basic education to eleven years. Two years preparatory course was also introduced which was not made compulsory but free in order to provide effective transition into the tertiary level of education or good skills for other works, certificate examination was held at the end of the basic education and the tertiary education.

Okoye (2001:10), observed that, in Brazil, the government took steps to provide 8-9 years basic educational opportunities to all the relevant age groups by extending the existing coverage of the education system to the remote areas of the country. Basic education, looking at the above idea or view does not limit itself to only the urban areas of a country rather; it covers both rural and urban areas without any form of discrimination; neglect or marginalization.

Universal Basic Education has also been launched by Ethiopian government in 1997/98 and in Gambia in the late 1980's and by Zambia in 1980, (world bank 2001). The whole world is waging war against

illiteracy, which is seen like any killer disease, an enemy to humanity. Governments are doing what is possible to eradicate it for better future, economic, political, and social as well as, technological and scientific development.

According to the International Reading Association (2000) as cited by Ircyefoju (2001:2), the Universal Basic Education forum held at Dakar has the following goals to attain between now and 2015 AD.

- i Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education care and education for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- ii Ensure that by the year 2005, all children especially girl children in difficult circumstances and those from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality, iii Ensure that the learning needs of all the young people are met through the equitable access to appreciate learning and life skills programmes, iv Achieve a fifty percent improvement level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women as well as equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.
- v Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality by 2015, with special focus on ensuring full and equal access for girls to basic education of good quality.
- vi Improve all aspects of the quality of education to achieve recognized and measurable and essential life skills.

The goals or aims of the universal basic education took a very good care of the weak members of the society including the minority, disadvantaged and girls, possibly because they appear to be very important for the future development of any country. For the girls in particular, though culturally based, for keeping of homes and material needs. Universal Basic Education concept wants to reduce the level of gender disparity, promote adult literacy, encourage rural dwellers, to slay in their areas to develop them, and train extension workers to encourage and enlighten people for accelerated development of themselves and their societies through education.

Universal Basic Education: The Case of Nigeria

The world declaration on EFA in Jomtien in 1990, categorically refers basic Education as "whole range of educational activities that takes place in different settings, which aimed to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults.

Basic learning encompasses the idea of literacy, oral expression, numeracy as well as problem solving. The contents of basic education include effective acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by an individual member of a society to make productive living.

The idea of basic education is a global innovation aimed at making human beings literate, it therefore has its root and developments from the global community. The idea of UBE is not Nigeria's brain - child, rather an extension of what the whole global community agreed to uphold. So, it is Nigeria's effort to go by what has already been required by the world to renew commitment to the provision and promotion of Basic Education for all of which Nigeria also was a signatory. There are number of conventions and conferences globally where the global antecedents of the UBE idea was developed, some of which were:

- a. The Jomtien, March, 1990, conference in Thailand, where the declaration and framework for action on EFA was held. The goals of the UBE/EFA were stipulated.
 - b. The New Delhi declaration of 1991, attended by E-9 countries, having the larger concentration-of illiterates.
 - c. The Ouagadougou declaration of 1992, which was a pan African declaration on the improvement of women and girls education.
 - d. The Amman re-affirmation convention of 1995, aimed at forceful pursuit of the Jomtien recommendations on Basic Education for All.
 - e. The Durban convention of 1998, which made strong statement of commitment to the promotion of EPA.
 - f. The OAU summit on Decade of Education in Africa (1997-2006), on inter African cooperation on Education, with a strong emphasis on the vigorous pursuit of basic education.
 - g. The world education forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in 26th - 28th April, 2000, which set "an agenda for Education in the 21st century".
- Six goals were approved as the targets of EFA in Jomtien conference of 1990. These goals are also

similar with the objectives of the Nigeria's UBE programme as the annual report (2001:6), reported which include; a. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment

- to its vigorous promotion;
- b. The promotion of free, Universal basic education for every Nigerian child of School going age;
- c. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out 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; and e. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The objectives of the UBE are clear and understandable. The aim lies in the total education of the Nigerian children to acquire free and universal education, in which children, youth and adults in Nigeria will have free access to primary and junior secondary education for the acquisition of life skills, literacy, numeracy, manipulative and communicative skills. Other important areas in human life are not also left out, like ethical, moral and civic values, which can make an individual a complete, balanced, and productive member of a society.

EFA, has the goal of making improvement in learning achievement of the citizen of all" counties in the world. The UBE, in a similar attempt, has the objective of catering for the learning needs of those who drop out or leave school for any reason with certain complementary approaches to promote their learning. The expansion of the early childhood care and developmental activities including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children is a goal of EFA, in which case, the UBE in Nigeria has designed its objectives in conformity with those of EFA in trying to develop in the entire citizenry consciousness for education as a vibrant tool for national development.

Based on the objectives of the Nigeria's UBE programme, it is clear that it has not deviated, from the six main goals of EFA, which approved the expansion of childhood care, universal access and completion of primary or any higher level regarded as basic, improvement in learning achievement reduction of adult illiteracy rate in Nigeria, expanded provision, of basic education and training in other essential skills required for youth and adults in Nigeria society and increased acquisition by individuals and families of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for better living, rapid social change and sustainable development through education.

A brief historical survey into the history of Universal Basic Education is relevant to this study to give good insight to the proper understanding of the current UBE programme in Nigeria. Since the enactment of the 1882, education ordinance, the Nigerian government relentlessly legislated on education matters, due to the importance it placed on educational development, it continued this way up to independence period, and with the regional governments and their parties did a lot to worlds free basic education. Action Group, formed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo made the first positive move . towards free basic education in 1952, the then western region minister of education, Chief S. O. Awokoya presented a proposal for the introduction of a free, Universal Primary Education (UPE) which eventually came into being on 17* January, 1955. Onojete (2001:45) observed that the Minister while presenting the proposal to the house of assembly on 30*July. 1952 was of the opinion that "educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution".

The government of the Eastern region led by Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe, under the National-Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) also took a leaf from the Action group of the Western region government and made a move in 1957, by launching another UPE scheme, that primary education be free, universal and compulsory.

General Oluscgun Obasanjo's led military government equally launched a nationwide Universal free primary education programme in September, 1976. The 1976 UPE scheme, as seen by Tahir (2001:2) "was, by the middle of the 1980's, bedeviled with a number of unforeseen and abominable difficulties, which rendered it virtually unsustainable".. •

While the current UBE programme was again launched by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, now a civilian president on the 30th September, 1999, in Sokoto in his launching address to the nation, he emphasized that education is not just a matter of acquiring skills, rather the term is better perceived when seen and understood as a means of instilling, especially in our young ones, the importance of a number of fundamental values, such as devotion to the continuity of this nation (Nigeria) as one, respect for the constitution and the importance of democracy, among other things are the inculcation of the sense of dignity of work and moral

uprightness as well as respect for others. El Yakub (2001: 3).

The first enrolment nationwide was made in 2000/2001 academic session. The objectives of the UBE programme as outlined by the president can only be achieved through functional and effective education. Such functional education should include vocational and technical education which will prepare the child for vocational skills which will make himself reliant through self employment; moral education which will prepare him as a responsible citizen of the nation and citizenship education and political education which will prepare him to participate actively in the political and social development of his country. For the UBE to succeed, it requires full cooperation of the community, local government as well as teachers. Every programme of this nature requires funds to be able to function effectively, UBE programme can be used to achieve nation building in terms of education and self actualization only if citizens of Nigeria support it. In line with the above idea, Obanya (2001:13), observes that

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a monumental national enterprise and its success will depend largely on the extent to which its efficient management can be assured. It is mainly for this reason that management becomes a Topical issue in the continuous policy dialogue on UBE

Following the challenges of management of UBE programme, Obanya, also recognizes some fundamental issues to be understood for a successful management of the programme as follows: Conceptualization i.e. the meaning of UBE itself.

- i The Nigerian constitution, with special emphasis on the need for true federalism.
- ii The challenges of the large numbers and related data and census problems of the country.
- iii Quality assurance or the need to build mass education into the process of mass schooling.
- iv The prevailing climate of doubt in the minds of the people, due to their experience of failed promises of the past.
- v The prevailing orthodoxy in managerial skills development for education.

The UBE programme is a great national learning crusade whose success mainly depends on effective, efficient and management as well as serious commitment of the programme.

Obanya (2001) observes the UBE, in keeping with the expanded vision of basic education, enunciated by the world conference on education for all (1990), has a wider scope and a more all embracing coverage than UPE and every other valiant of "free education, at all levels".

The National Policy on Education (2004:14), believes that what would be achieved at secondary and tertiary levels would solely depend on the foundation laid at the primary level. It therefore, emphasized that government places high premium on primary education because it is "the key to the success or failure of the whole system". The UBE Programme needs serious campaign and publicity nationwide and most especially in the perceived educationally backwards areas of Nigeria, and issues of educational imbalances may be tackled right from the primary level of education in Nigeria instead of rushing for admission quotas in higher institutions of learning as Onojete (2001:48)

observes:

...Government and political leaders are seeking solution to educational imbalance by socking for enrolment into institutions of higher learning. The solution to education imbalance lies in the primary school enrolment; therefore, it is now that the UBE scheme has been launched. This we can achieve through aggressive enrolment of pupils into primary one nationwide.

This effort will however, emphasize reinforcement and encouragement on the part of the three-tiers of governments by seriously and effectively monitoring pupils progress to arrest drop out of pupils on a large scale. Mass schooling may not yield positive results or benefit to the nation, but mass education and enrolment of pupils into the primary education including the implementation of the objectives of the UBE programme in the enhancement of relevant quality, equality and efficiency. The UBE programme will not simply count numbers but will, infact, place greater emphasis on social and educational impact of the school system, on transforming more numbers into that critical mass educated persons needed for national development.

Conclusion

Nigeria, as a developing nation, did not achieve the goal of "basic" education adequately by the year 2000, even with its UBE scheme introduced in 1999, the programme is still trying to achieve its goals.

Achieving the goals embraced at the Jomtien requires not only that children be admitted to school when they are of age, but that they complete the entire primary cycle and, equally important, learn at an

appropriate level. Children, youth and adults in Nigeria should undergo the years of . schooling necessary to acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to become continuing . learners for sustainable development.

Nigeria is not the only developing country that was unable to achieve EFA by the year 2000 despite the best efforts of these countries. The UNESCO (2000:5), in the EFA from Jomtien to Dakar and beyond" observe that "the world did not achieve its EFA targets". Some reasons advanced were " that, in 1990, as many as 100 million children aged 6 to 11, were not in school, by 2000, this number; had grown to 125 million. The World Bank in UNESCO (2000:5), observed that many factors both positive and negative contributed to the less achievement of the targets of EFA as a result of unprecedented changes.

Suggestion

For proper achievement and realization of objectives of basic education in Nigeria in particular and world in general, the following suggestions are proffered.

- A. Mass education and literacy campaigns for the citizens to be aware of the impotence of education as a vehicle of progress.
- B. Funding by governments, non governmental organizations and UNESCO.
- C. Establishment of adult literacy classes
- D. Procurement of teaching-learning materials
- E. Training of more teachers

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