

QUALITY INDICATORS (QI) FOR THE SUCCESS OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Now that Universal Basic Education (UBE) as one of the reforms in Nigeria Education has come to stay, a number of measures that could operationally serve as predictors of its standard and/or **success in** qualitative terms are very significant. These measures, termed Quality Indicators (QI) in this paper are structurally presented and examined in a working order as Antecedent Indicators (AI) and Transaction Indicators (TI) to ensure that on the whole, the acquisition of the appropriate levels of basic education, and civic values for development are achieved through all the avenues of Universal Basic Education Programmes in Nigeria. Although, equalitarian ideas on what constitute quality in terms of standard, value, degree, efficiency and factors may not be conclusive,, this paper strongly recommends **that** both the antecedent and transaction indicators treated in this paper are significant means for Quality Assurance in Universal Basic Education Programmes (QAUBEP) in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria Universal Basic Education (USE) was launched on September 30th 1999 by the former civilian president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo with the aim of reaching the unreached, that is, Nigeria children and the illiterate adults in all social conditions and geographical locations. Likewise the scheme is to cater for young persons who have had interrupted schooling and to promote basic education. Basic education is the foundation for sustainable life long learning (Adekoya and Olorunfemi, 2002). It covers primary, junior secondary, nomadic education and adult education with the intention, of providing functional literacy.

Universal Basic Education (*UBE*) among all other objectives is meant to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying solid foundation for life-long learning (Balogun, 2002). With the intention that every citizen could enjoy the fundamental human right to education, it is intended that the UBE programme has to be universalized covering lower basic education, middle basic education, upper basic education and non-formal education and created locations varying from ideal schools to appalling centres in compounds and garage among others.

The specific objectives of Universal Basic Education scheme in Nigeria as stated by Badejo (2004) are to:

- (1) develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for .education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (2) provide free compulsory universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school going age;
- (3) reduce drastically, dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;

- (4) cater for dropouts and out of school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision of UBE;
- (5) ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and-life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning (p. 82-83).

Universal basic education programme has therefore become one of the priorities of Nigerian government. Access to the programme, quality of its take-off and products, management issues-and efficiency, among other factors are the obvious areas which continue to receive attention till date. In this paper therefore, quality assurance is the area of concentration as one of the measures for ensuring that the objectives of the UBE programmes are achieved in Nigeria.

Quest for Quality in Universal Basic Education Programmes: The Place of Quality Indicators (QI)

At different levels in Nigeria education, the term quality has often been used as a grading word. Its definition is however as varied as the number of commentators who have addressed the concept. The expressions used in describing the concept of quality have evidently served as a standard to express concern on the "decline in the quality of education" in Nigeria. According to Webster's New Dictionary of English Language, the concept of quality is described severally with the following terms: "degree of excellence", "degree of conformity to standard" and "inherent good traits"⁵. Adeniran (2003) identified some definitions of quality thus:

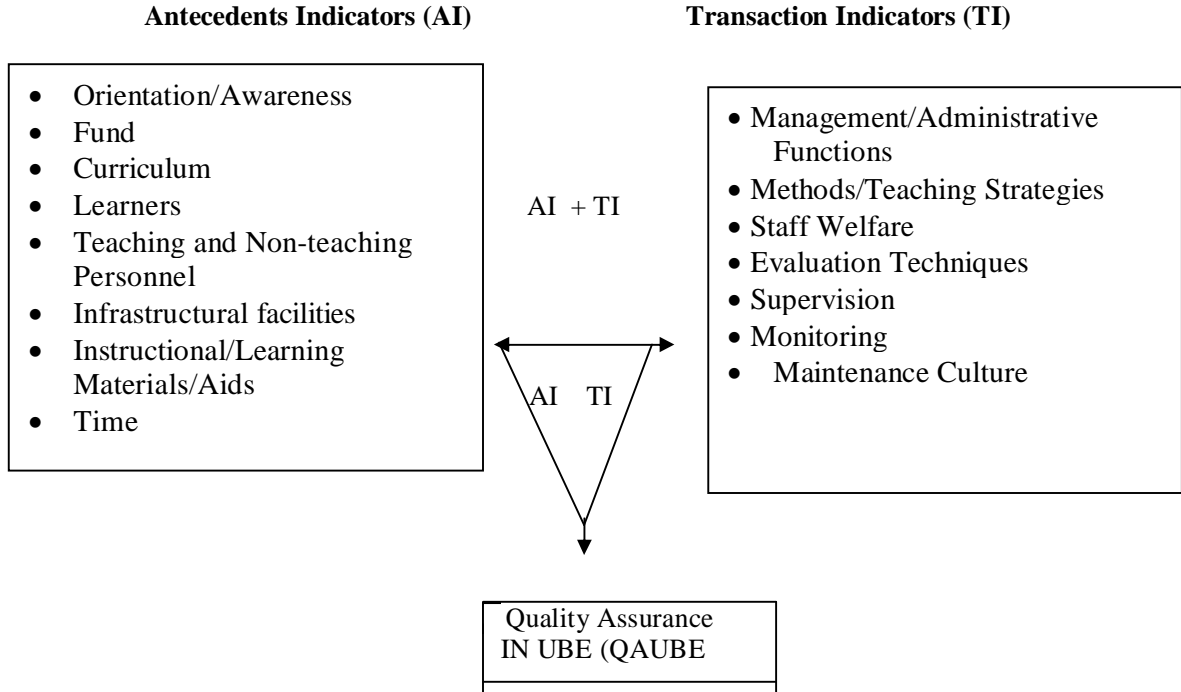
- is determined by the degree [o] which the previously set objectives are met;
- is defined as fitness for a purpose;
- can be defined in terms of added value;
- is the satisfaction of the user;
- is defined by both learning environment and students' outcome (p. 112)

Quality, as it affects UBE, is the satisfying level of its operation and the product potentials to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. Although, quality in education is seen as a controversial issue, with no universally accepted criteria to determine it, its pursuance for a successful Universal Basic Education (UBE) in practice is very significant in education. Quality in education is a level of measurement in relation to productivity (Gowon, 2000). It determines human and societal development.

In the words of a renowned scholar and cited in Adeniran (2003), "Quality is like love: Everybody talks about it, everybody knows and feels it, but when we try to define it, we are at a loss". In order to avoid a total loss of quest for quality in UBE programme therefore, and to achieve what UBE is designed for, vital indicators hold a significant place. An indicator means that which points out or indicates the amount/quantity, condition or situation of something (Olagboye, 2000). Quality Indicators (QI) are thus the relevant and essential factors which would determine the standard, degree of success, the sustenance, and continuity of UBE programme in Nigeria. Despite the varied equalitarian ideas and conceptual dimensions of quality in the available literature, definable quality indicators if addressed, pursued and well established in the right dimension become the essential tools for high yield in various aspects and levels of UBE programme in Nigeria.

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The question now is "What are the quality indicators to be targeted for quality assurance in all aspects of UBE terrain? Many of such quality indicators include class size, student/teacher ratio, school size, fund, methods of instruction and resource availability (Angelina & Kantiok; 2003 & Sheyin, 2002). However, a more comprehensive and obvious quality indicators are structurally and subsequently presented and examined in this paper.



(Adapted from Alade, I. A .2006): Evaluation of Technical Education Curriculum in Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria and Ivowi, U.M.O (1993): Curriculum Development in Nigeria.)

As shown in figure 1, eight antecedent Indicators (AI) are identified along with seven Transaction Indicators (TI) with the conviction that with them among many others all things being equal, quality could be installed and maintained in UBE programme. The indicators are enumerated in the order in which they are stated in figure I.

Antecedent Indicators (AI)

Orientation/Awareness: Adequate and continuous orientation and increasing awareness of the society on the purpose of UBE programme cannot be underscored. The importance of basic education (Universal) for Nigerian children and illiterate adults should not be a once in a while affair. People's enthusiasm should be aroused towards it through appropriate mobilization of efforts. In doing this, rural dwellers should not be kept in the dark for this universal basic education programme is not mainly for the urban dwellers.

Fund: It is indeed pertinent to stress that Universal Basic Education (UBE) must not die. The progress and success of it needs enough money. The money invested in a programme is a strong determinant of the gain. Funding of the programme by the federal government, state government contribution, local government participation and private bodies donations are needed for "the procurement of relevant resources. By implication, finance could constitute a serious limiting factor to the successful implementation of UBE. Also, money being invested on UBE should be appropriately expended by the concerned quarters and accountability of such monetary investment should be honestly pursued.

Curriculum: The issue of relevance is of particular significance in any discussion on qualitative education and curricular matters. With the conception that UBE curriculum has social relevance, the pursuance of its curriculum implementation should aim at achieving the objectives. The outcome of its implementation should not be at par with the intended objectives.

Learners: Children are the legacy we can bequeath our nation. They should be motivated and be carried along in UBE affairs. Their motivation and capacity to learn during the teaching-learning process is a function of their involvements (in the planning), their home and school environment, health and nutrition status, and the level of parental stimulation. Learners characteristics are thus very important. Children's right to UBE as well as their contributions is the responsibility of us all. John Hay once said, "I think that saving a little child, and bringing him to his own. is a darned sight better business, than loafing around the throne". Adequate children's consent and characteristics are thus very important in UBE operations in Nigeria.

Teaching and Non Teaching Personnel: The success of UBE programme in Nigeria can be enhanced by providing systematic programme to develop staff; increasing professional opportunities and staff incentives; and defining career paths. Only competent personnel with adequate knowledge, pedagogical skills and techniques are capable to transmit cherished beliefs, vital knowledge and essentials of the cultural heritage. We should remember that no system can surpass the quality of its personnel or functionaries. In essence, human resource development is a vital antecedent indicator.

Infrastructural Facilities: Massive production and rehabilitation of infrastructural facilities in educational institutions would improve the learning environment. The construction of enough classroom blocks, libraries, laboratories, offices and provisions of furniture in adequate proportion is also an essential antecedent indicator of what can come out of UBE. They largely determine teacher: learner ratio and take care of population explosion.

Instructional/Learning Materials/Aids: The gross inadequacies of instructional materials which have obviously affected Nigerian education over the years should not be allowed to have a carry over effect on UBE programme. Instructional materials like textbooks, stationeries and numerous other instructional aids should be continuously provided by the appropriate quarters. The introduction of computer application which is a new development in Nigerian education history and activities needs more government attention for it to go round.

Time: The time available for learning is an important factor in achieving UBE objectives in the country. Although, Nigeria education as a whole is still faced with the challenge of ensuring that the

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amount of time input or duration, which goes into a programme and the time spent on task by teachers is increased considerably. Flexible time specifications, time management, and adequate arrangement of working hours are vital for UBE success. This consideration would work effectively if the obstructions in the school year is also reduced to the best minimum through adequate consultations between educational institutions and government representatives on issues that may eventually cause abnormal closure of schools in Nigeria.

Management/Administrative Functions: It is important to note that the management of the teaching and non-teaching activities in UBE programme comes up at the implementation phase. In order to fine-tune the lukewarm posture and the absence of dedication on the part of any erring staff, objective personnel management is important. The woes and hydra-headed problems that have bogged down and scuttled the growth and continued development of education in Nigeria for sometime in the areas of managerial/administrative activities in schools should not be allowed to infect UBE. If at all it has infected it, it should not be allowed to lead to a total loss of hope and efforts into the programme. If the human resources are well tutored, managed and administered, there will be better productivity. Managerial competency is therefore, advocated for.

Methods/Strategies: Since the long evolution of education, many methods/strategies of instruction have been utilized. However, knowledge explosion and need for change and improvement has rendered the traditional ways of teaching obsolete. In order to enrich learning, the pedagogical practices for basic education activities should accommodate the teaching innovations on ground. Concerted efforts by the teaching personnel to adopt and adapt new and relevant methods, strategies and techniques/approaches while transacting with learners will help in reversing the perennial dismal performance of school-going youths at all levels of UBE scheme and the non-formal group.

Staff Welfare: Provision of adequate working tools for UBE staff and commensurate remuneration could boost the morale of the working staff. There must be unceasing drive to enhance staff welfare by promoting deserving staff, provision of bonuses, special packages, prompt payment of salaries and allowances, and visible pension scheme for the staff. This transaction indicator determines how much efforts the implementers of UBE programme put into its operation.

Evaluation Techniques: Objective evaluation techniques is important in judging the worth, quality, significance and degree of success or otherwise on an executed programme,. This is with a view to rating, correcting, improving or changing a part or the whole project. Evaluation in UBE at various levels of implementation and completion should not be haphazardly carried out. Machineries within and outside the programme implementation should participate in evaluation activities for reliabilities of results upon which improvement could be done. The evaluation techniques or strategies and instruments should be put to reliability test for standardization and valid evaluation outcomes.

Supervision: Supervisory roles in UBE implementation is to fulfill supervisors' functions of directing the programme activities. Efforts should be made to appreciate the skills and abilities possessed by individual staff and guide them to make optimum use of such skills and abilities with

adequate motivation not as authoritarian supervisors in UBE implementation Supervision is concerned with the working staff punctuality and dedication to duties for the programme success.

Monitoring: For a significant progress on the BLUEPRINT OF UBE in Nigeria to be made, a day-to-day/time-to-time or regular evaluation of UBE put in place at various levels and quarters is of great importance. This aims at ensuring that the scheme is carried out as planned, done to specification, and for quick detection of error or mistakes, and for proper correction, It is a means of ensuring that the scheme serves the intended purpose.

Maintenance Culture: Poor maintenance culture is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into numerous educational polices and practices in Nigeria. Nigeria maintenance culture must improve. It is either we maintain what we have or loose it. For any meaningful and long lasting UBE, maintenance of all the resources which go into the programme should be practiced in a routine manner. There is the need to also stress that the investment on resources is for the success of UBE. Since we cannot afford to keep the recipients of UBE inactive, individuals, government and corporate bodies should work co-operatively to improve the maintenance culture of the country. It is on this ground that the scheme which is over nine years old since it took off in January 2000 will be successful to an appreciable extent.

In summary, the antecedent Indicators (AI) and the Transaction Indicators (TI) discussed in this paper will promote the actualization of UBE objectives since each of them has a linkage with others .Structurally, therefore, quality assurance in UBE{QAUBE} is a function of Antecedent Indicators (AI) and Transaction Indicators (TI) as presented earlier in figure I.

$$QAUBE = AI + TI$$

$$\text{Quality Indicators (QI)} = AI + TI - QAUBE.$$

In essence, the state of the quality indicators determines the output of universal basic education in Nigeria. It should however be noted that the fifteen quality indicators (altogether) identified are not conclusive, but could be carried along with other indicators which have bearing with UBE programme design and implementation.

Conclusion

The need for the promotion of quality UBE in Nigeria has informed the particular attention given to the quality indicators examined in this paper. Our major concern on the whole, is the urgent need to face the challenges of this era of UBE as one of the reforms in Nigerian education with courage, hope, resilience and unflinching determination to sustain the confidence reposed on the programme. Consequent upon these, and since the quality of both the antecedent indicators and transaction indicators are the influencing factors for UBE results and success, it is recommended that adequate attention in quantitative and qualitative terms as at when due should be given to them to ensure that the universal conception of Universal Basic Education scheme and its attendant objectives are not only optimally achieved but improved at ail times.

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