

# **THE NEED FOR APPROPRIATE FUNDING AND MONITORING OF THE UBE PROGRAMME**

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## **Abstract**

The need to ensure education for all in Nigeria led to the launching of the Universal Basic Education programme (UBE). There is need to ensure adequate funding and monitoring of the programme by everybody since it has been realized that Government alone cannot ensure this otherwise the programme will suffer the same fate as the former UPE. All tiers of Government, individuals, private bodies, NGOs, Mission houses, PTA, alumni associations, philanthropists are therefore called upon to contribute financially to the success of the programme with the Government playing a leadership role.

## **Introduction**

Any nation that toys with her education toys with her future. Education, especially at the primary level is recognized as the right of every Nigerian in the constitution. The Bauchi State Government has, in line with this, urged Organizations, Communities, groups and individuals to ensure the protection of the children's rights as a measure aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against them in the areas of education, skill development and training for the improvement of quality of their lives. Paralleling this view is the Federal Government resolve at providing free primary education for all (an approach known as social demand) by launching the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999/2000 by the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

In 1976, the Universal Primary education was also launched by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who was then the Military Head of State. In the same vein, late Chief Obafemi Awolowo started "education-for-all" under the platform of Action Group in 1955. In both cases (1955 and 1976), some problems were encountered. Such problems as population explosion, insufficient and unqualified teachers, insufficient facilities, shortage of fund and unreliable statistics deserve mention. All these brought together, in addition to some social and cultural factors peculiar to Nigeria, led to the collapse of the UPE, Will UBE also collapse?

Adequate financing of the UBE programme devoid of corruption will help solve most of the problems enumerated above. In the past, financing of primary education has been largely done by the Federal Government. Should only the Federal Government continue with the funding or should all the tiers, private organizations and individuals be involved? These questions form the crux of this paper.

## **The Concept Of Basic Education And The Focus Of UBE In Nigeria**

The Jiontien World Conference on Education for All in 1990 according to Obanya (2000) sees basic education as:

- not simply a package, but more of a process ;
- not simply a question of number of years of schooling, but more of a question of consolidating literacy and numeracy, the acquisition of socially appropriate life skills, and especially the skill of learning how to learn;
- not simply a question of how much has been learnt, but more of the extent to which the learner has been prepared for life-long learning.

In Nigeria, the struggle for broadening opportunities for education was embarked upon by Governments at local and state and national levels, though it was begun by the colonial masters in the 1940s. For instance, there was the free primary education programme of the old Western Region in 1955 initiated by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the UPE programme of Obasanjo in 1976 and the Unity Party of Nigeria (political party) "free education at all levels"

programme of 1979-1983.

The UBE programme was also launched along this thinking with the belief that it had drawn appropriate lessons from Nigeria's past experiences and has striven to ensure conformity with the international conception of basic education. Obanya (2000) states the scope of UBE as follows:

- Programme/initiative for early childhood care and socialization;
- Education programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life-skills especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above);
- Out of school, non-formal programme for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning;
- Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education ; and
- The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the junior secondary school.

Indeed the challenges to the UBE programme are enormous.

### **Objectives Of The UBE**

The UBE programme is saddled with a lot of responsibilities as contained in the stated objectives. With reference to Obanya (2000) and in line with Government's focus, the UBE programme has the following objectives:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency);
- 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
- Ensuring 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 a solid foundation for life-long learning.

These grandiose objectives call for adequate funding of the programme. The parties to be involved are therefore a cause for concern.

### **Funding the USE: Whose Responsibility?**

The Lagos State Education Year Book (1997) posits that public primary education in public -owned schools will be "tuition free since expenses for primary education will be joint responsibility of federal, state and local Governments". In line with this, Obanya (2000) maintains that "adequate funding of the programme is a prime goal". Along this reasoning, the following sources of funding the programme have been suggested:

the three tiers of government  
other government sources and  
Private/community contributions.

He therefore calls for a judicious use of funds. Oguntoye and Alani (1998) states that the local, state and federal governments are involved in the funding of primary education". To Ehiamentor (1995) (ed.), the list is as follows: all the tiers of the Government, individuals, communities, religious bodies, industrial bodies, philanthropists and PTA/Alumni association. This seems more important and realistic than others going by the expensive nature of the

education industry. Among the major items that will attract a lot of money at this level are facilities/equipment and teachers, research, supervision among others. On facilities/equipment, the following deserves mention: classroom accommodation, pupils' seats, desks, chairs, staff-rooms, toilet facilities tiers, tables, library facilities, water supply, electricity supply, typewriters etc. Many of the existing school buildings are on the verge of collapse either because of old age or lack of maintenance. The cost to put up new school buildings now is prohibitive, yet they must be taken care of if UBE is to commence fully. These underscore the need for adequate funding. Writing along this line, Akangbu (1987) identifies the following sources of funding: tuition fees, government grants, donations and endowments, loans and revenue yielding projects. However, with the focus of the government on UBE, tuition fees cannot be introduced.

### **Financing Trend of Primary Education in the Past**

In 1976, the UPE programme was introduced with the intention of providing free primary education for all and bridging the educational gap between the North and South. The Federal Government financed the programme entirely, while the State Governments monitored the implementation of the scheme. Between 1976 and 1983, the responsibility for the management of primary education was placed on the local Government Councils by the Federal Government while the State Government assisted with the provision of physical infrastructure and teaching materials. This period, according to Oguntoye and Alani (1998), witnessed delay in the payment of teachers' salaries, insufficient materials in schools among other problems. The Local Government Councils lacked the financial power to fund primary education.

In 1988, the Federal Government inaugurated the National Primary Education Commission (NEPC) and the National Primary Education Fund (NPEF) through Decree 31 of that year. The Decree mandated the Federal, State and local Governments to contribute 65, 20 and 15 percent respectively of the calculated personnel costs in primary schools. Apart from this, the Local and State Governments were expected to jointly provide the needed physical facilities. While some State Governments failed to contribute their share of the National Primary Educational Fund, the difference in the financial strength of the Local Government Councils, lack of accountability and corruption affected the funding of primary education (Oguntoye and Alani, 1998).

In 1991, by Decree 3, the Federal Government mandated the Local Government Councils to manage primary education. Then, the share of the local Government councils in the federation account was increased from 10 to 15 percent. This decree also put in place the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and Local Government Education Committee (LGEC) in each Local Government Area of the federation. The LGEA was charged, among others, with the responsibility of disbursement of funds made available to it from the local Government sources: payment of salaries and allowances of teaching and non-teaching staff in primary schools; ensuring that accounts are audited annually; rendering of annual estimates, annual accounts and monthly accounts to the Authority; provision of materials and equipment for primary schools within its jurisdiction and embarking on capital projects and maintenance of physical facilities in primary schools are some of the major functions they were saddled with (Oguntoye and Alani, 1998).

Controversies were generated when the management of primary education was transferred to the councils. This led to a redefinition of roles of each tier of the Government. The councils were charged with the duty of paying salaries, allowance, pensions and Government was mandated to provide physical infrastructure and maintain existing facilities. The State Ministry of Education was also asked to monitor and supervise schools to ensure standard. The Federal Government had the power to enforce minimum standard and sanction any Local Government Councils or State governments that failed to fulfil their mandate. It was believed that with the Local Government's participation in the management of education, the local communities would be more willing to contribute to primary education financing.

In 1993, Decree 96 again re-established NPEC. Thus the body had the responsibilities of advising the federal Government in Nigeria, receiving National Primary Education Fund and allocating same to the Primary Education

Board in each State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and any agency responsible for the Federal Government sponsored special primary education project according to a specified formula. The decree also established the National Primary Education Fund which was distributed as follows:

- (a) 50 percent on the basis of quality of state;
- (b) 25 percent to all educationally disadvantaged;
- (c) 15 percent on the basis of school enrolment;
- (d) 10 percent on the basis of population.

The allocation to educationally disadvantaged states was shared using the following criteria:

- (i) 50 percent on the basis of equality of state; (ii) 25 percent on the basis of school enrolment; (iv) 25 percent on the basis of population, (Oguntoye and Alani, 1998).

The NPEC is jointly financed by the Federal, State and Local Governments. The national fund contributed by the federal Government is primarily for capital projects. The state government's contribution to the fund is estimated as 15 percent of the total contributions by all the Local Government councils in that particular state. This contribution is utilized to pay remunerations of the board's employees and to cover overhead costs of the Board, teaching and non-teaching staff and the salaries and allowances, (FRN, 1995).

Presently, the Federal Government has taken over largely the funding of primary education. Little amount is contributed by parents. In some states of the federation, the PTA plays active roles in the payment of salaries of teachers employed by the association, construction and maintenance of physical facilities like classrooms.

The problem of inadequate funding of primary education might have arisen as a result of the insufficient funds allocated to the education sector and high level of corruption. Unfortunately, primary schools have insignificant sources of internal revenue.

There is the need for the Government to increase its allocation to primary education because it is the foundation upon which future educational aspiration of pupils are built. Government should be wholly responsible for funding public primary schools because of the need to eradicate illiteracy since one of the objectives of social demand approach to education according to Olaniyonu and Adekoya (1997) is to "eradicate or reduce the level of illiteracy". This is not however to suggest that voluntary private contributions should not be allowed or encouraged.

### **Likely Problems to Confront UBE**

It is likely that the implementation fully of the UBE programme may not begin in time due to some foreseeable problems. The minimum qualification allowed in primary schools now is N.C.E. Virtually all the Colleges of Education

in the country train teachers on specialized fields or subjects which are contrary to what operates in primary schools where all subjects are taught by a teacher. So there might be the problem of shortage of teachers since there is only one college of education in the country that trains teachers for this purpose. Other problems include rising population which according to Aghenta (1999) is moving at over 3 percent and has direct implication for school facilities and equipment, staffing quality control and so on; crude or unreliable statistical data upon which forecasts are made: social and cultural factors in which case the belief that women should not be well read is still being held in some parts of the country; politicization of education to suit certain people's interest and of course funding. However, with adequate funding, the problem of

facilities and equipment can be overcome in time.

### **Conclusion**

Primary education is the bedrock of any educational system. With the principle of education for all as enshrined in the UBE, without adequate funding of the programme this will not be realized going by the experiences of the UPE of the past. To this end everybody should be involved in funding - all tiers of the Government, individuals, private bodies, NGOs and of course grants although there could be other problems like population explosion, unreliable data, shortage of staff etc. apart from adequate funding that can affect the successful implementation of the UBE programme.

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