
ADEQUATE FUNDING POLICY FOR NINE-YEAR BASIC EDUCATION: THE PANACEA TO CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

DR. GLADYS UZOECHINA

*Anambra State University,
Uli.*

Abstract

The paper sees adequate funding policy for the nine year Basic education as the panacea to the challenges of education in Nigeria. Education became a huge government venture because it is seen as a veritable instrument for the achievement of national development and integration. Hence, with the takeover of schools by government, it placed huge financial burdens upon herself. There was need for adequate funding to deal with the challenges of overstretched facilities, enrolment explosion, poorly trained teachers and poor remuneration of teachers. The paper however concluded that education funding is one of the areas that have been affected by politics. It also concluded that human and non human resources are not adequately made available for the full implementation of the UBE programme. The paper recommended for partnership between the government and other developmental agencies to enhance the development of the programme.

The Nigerian constitution put education under the concurrent list. This implies that federal, state and local governments can legislate on education as long as it is not inconsistent with the constitution. For this reason, funding has become a constant and major source of conflict in the management and administration of education at all levels in Nigeria. The Federal government cannot dictate to the state government how to manage primary, secondary and tertiary schools within the jurisdiction of the state, but nothing stops Federal government from establishing its own school like the Federal Government Colleges or tertiary institutions in any state (Lassa, 2006). In order to bring parity, the feeling of relative problems for western education poses several

problems for harmonious relation and national integration. Against this backdrop, if the acquisition of equality in education, or lack of it was not associated with competitive participation in economy and government, the question of equality in education would never have been an issue of major concern in the administration and management of education in Nigeria. On the one hand, this had led to clamouring for special funds for the development of education in some states that regard themselves as educationally backward. It has also led to series of conflicting interests in the disbursement and budget allocations to the education sector both at the various states and national levels.

The document further specified the functions of the Federal Ministry of Education, the state Ministry of Education and local schools boards and directed that planning in the ministries of education should be headed by professionals while teachers in the rural areas should be encouraged to stay on their jobs through special and adequate inducement (Osokoya, 1997). In addition, because the document specifies the role of education as “an instrument par excellence” for achieving national development, education therefore became a huge government venture with total government takeover of schools in the country. It was believed that the idea would bring about a uniform standard of education in all the institutions.

This gesture however meant the acceptance of more financial responsibilities by the government. In effect, the government became unable to cope with financial burden of running the schools and this invariably led to a general low standard of education in Nigeria. Some of the problems of the UBE programme include:

- Overstretched facilities
- A population explosion into schools
- Poorly trained teachers
- Poor remuneration in teachers’ wages leading to poor motivation and low morals.
- Little or no plans for career development for teachers
- Inflexible curricula
- Inadequate supervision of schools
- Lack of teacher supervision

Onocha (2002:4) enumerated major challenges of UBE to include:

Insufficient funds for state primary education boards (SPEBs) to run the UBE programme, little or no running cost (overhead) for local government education authorities (LGEAs) and difficult terrain in riverine and hilly areas, as well as in areas without access roads. Others include employment of unqualified teachers in some states, high teacher/pupils ratio in urban areas, lack of effective school supervision in some states due to lack of transportation for supervisors, insufficient furniture for both teachers and pupils.

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Political Interferences in Funding Basic Education in Nigeria

Basic primary education everywhere in the world is the foundation of sustainable life-long learning which provides reading, writing and numeracy skills (FGN, 2000). Among other things, its objectives include to provide free basic literacy for every child of school going age, and to cater for such dropouts or out of school children/adolescents through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of this programme. The extent and manner human and material resources are available and handled by government and other agencies often have positive or negative effects on the programme and from various indications these resources are still in short fall (Obiara, 2006).

Accordingly, Denga (2006) defined Basic education as that type of education in quality and content which shall be of nine years duration comprising six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. This framework for action to meet basic learning needs served as a blue print to improved educational activities.

Nigeria launched the universal primary education in 1976, but it failed because of lack of funds and corruption. The 6334 system which came on board as a result of the 1981 policy document on education also suffered poor implementation by government. For instance, the Decree 3 of 1991 transferred the funding and management of primary education to local governments. This generated a lot of controversies between NUT and the Federal Government. One aspect of the controversy concerns the question of whether states or local governments are under the constitutional authority to fund and manage primary schools. It was argued that education funds were often diverted to other purposes resulting to willful failure to pay teachers' salaries or provide essential facilities. Under the NPEC (which existed before the Decree but was dissolved due to political interest of state governments) funds were shared among the states according to prescribed formula.

The introduction of the 9-3-4 Basic Education programme in September 1999 is not expected to change the 6-3-3-4. What the government is simply doing is to recognize the first nine years as basic, tuition free, compulsory and without interruption. (Lassa 2006) However, funding this programme has also generated controversies between the Federal, State and Local Governments due to the counterpart funding arrangement.

Currently, funding and management of primary schools is undertaken by the state governments and with the nine years basic education, the need for Common Entrance Examinations will phase out and it is expected that Federal government will introduce new national entrance for JSS graduates to be admitted into SSS of unity and state schools. It is important to emphasize that for the smooth operation and implementation of the 9 year basic scheme at all levels, the political agenda of the country should not interfere or affect the budgetary allocation to education.

The Way Forward

According to Anyaogu (2001), the possibility that UBE aims and objectives will be achieved or implemented cannot be ruled out. The present problems may soon be a thing of the past. There is prospect that connotes outlook upon the probable future, expectation and change to success. The UBE programme has the prospects of success if there is optimal allocation and efficient utilization of fund and resources, alternative sources of funding of education created, mobilized, sustained, and budgetary allocation increased. Eradication of illiteracy may be ensured through the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civil values needed for laying solid foundation for life.

There is also need to develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness and commitment for education, vigorous promotion and provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.

Gender equality in education should be emphasized by improving all aspects of quality education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all. Realizing the prospects of UBE programme will enable the country enroll in the list of developed countries in the world. This can be better achieved by laying a sound base for scientific and reflective thinking, giving citizenship education as a base for effective participation in governance and contribution to the life of the society and finally developing in the child the ability to adapt to any changing environment.

Conclusion

Education funding and financing is one of the major areas that has been affected by politics. The conclusion that is drawn from this paper is that human and non-human resources are not adequately made available by the government and stakeholders in education for full implementation of the basic Education programme under the 6334 system.

Recommendation

Based on the above conclusion, it is therefore suggested that government at various levels have to provide necessary funds, good learning environment and teaching aids that will facilitate successful implementation and administration of the 9 year basic education policy in Nigeria. There should be innovation and psychomotor competencies, social, democratic and moral values that will make products of the system self-reliant and useful to the society. To solve the problem of funding of the programme, there is need for a partnership between the government and other development agencies that will enhance non-power development for both students and teachers. Unless this is done, human capacity development for Nigeria may remain an illusion.

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