

JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICIES

VOL. 1, NO. 4, 2007



DUNCAN SCIENCE

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)
PROGRAMME IN IKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF DELTA STATE

Okokoyo Isabel Ezinwa; Ikpeba Violet Asua and Irefoju Jackson Paul
Department of Educational Foundation and Administration

College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study, through a structured questionnaire responded to by school administrators and service teachers, appraised the challenges of the UBE Programme at the Primary Education level in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. The study gave consideration to such areas as pupils' enrolment, teachers motivation and mobilization, physical facilities, sensitization and socialization of all stake holders, finance and management, planning and government policies. The study reveals among other things the low level of awareness, mobilization, motivation and socialization of school administrators, service teachers and other stakeholders in the education industry. The study also reveals the poor physical state of infrastructural facilities, low funding, lack of realistic data for planning and fluctuating government policies.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education Programme, Appraisal, Challenges, Stakeholders, Mobilization And Sensitization.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The attempt at democratization and universalisation has long been a global trend towards the realization of efficient and effective governance and participation of every individual in the affairs of its community (Yoloye, 1992). UBE programme is Nigeria attempt to uphold and renew her commitment to the provision and promotion of basic education for all as required by number of covenants she was a signatory. These include Jomtien (1990) declaration on basic education for all, new Delhi (1991) calling for reduction of illiteracy within the shortest possible time, Ovagadougou (1992) Pan African Declaration on the education of the girl child and women and Amman Reaffirmation (1995) on the forceful pursuit of the Jomtien recommendation on EFA. Others include Durban (1998) statement of commitment to the promotion of education for all, all decade of education in Africa (1997, 2006) on inter African co-operation on education with emphasis on basic education, and the Dakar world Education Forum (2000) which sets an agenda for education in the 21st century (Agaaku, 2003). Attempt at free, compulsory and universal education started as a regional issue in the 1950's. Then it was Universal Primary Education (UPE). A concerted effort in 1976 made UPE a national issue, than regional matter. The planning and organization of the UPE to some imaginable extent, were products of economic boom but its implementation was a victim of economic depression. The various political parties at different times pursued free, compulsory and universal primary education in the states where a political party has majority control. However this attempt also met its Waterloo because the political parties used education to prove a political point-governance is about the people's welfare. On September 30th 1999 the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the UBE programme to vigorously pursue the recommendations of the Jomtien declaration on basic education. What, then is Universal Basic Education Programme? The Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action on Education for all defines Basic Education broadly as a close, articulation of the formal, non-formal and informal approaches and mechanisms for the awakening and all-round development of human potential (obioma n.d). The broad aim of basic education is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the articulation of appropriate learning-to-learn self-awareness, citizenship and life-long skills. The above definition and aim of the UBE showed that basic education is not restricted to years and span of schooling. It is also not restricted to formal schooling. It includes non-formal and informal education. It is against this polymorphous nature of basic education that made Obanya (2000) to refer to the concept of basic education as ambiguous. In other words, the concept of basic education varies from one country to another country depending on the aim, aspirations, expectations, desires, etc of a given country. The countries that were signatories to the Jomtien (1990) declaration are mostly countries from developing economy with high rate of illiteracy, poverty, poor health condition, low rate of girl child and women education, high population growth rate to mention but a few. Because Nigeria belongs to the above-mentioned features she adopted the following as the objectives of the UBE:

- ❖ develop in the citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion

... universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.

An Appraisal of the Challenges of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State

- ❖ Reduce drastically the incidence of school dropout, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency
- ❖ Cater for the learning needs of young school leavers and
- ❖ Ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a strong foundation for life-long learning (FGN, 2000).

In the implementation of the UBE guidelines, it is stipulated that the following programmes shall be covered (i.e scope).

- programmes initiatives for early childhood care and socialization
- educational programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills; especially for adult persons (age 15 years and above)
- special programmes for nomadic population.
- out of school, non-formal programmes for up-dating the knowledge and skills for persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life-long.
- non-formal skills and apprenticeship training of adolescents and youths 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 education (FGN 2000).

This study is only interested in the last scope of the UBE programme with special emphasis on primary education – the first nine years of Basic education. The study sets to appraise the level of awareness of school administrators and service teachers of the challenges of the UBE programme. Put simply how prepared are school administrators and service teachers for the UBE programme at the primary education level in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State? The researchers feel that it is necessary to obtain teachers and school administrators perceptions in appraising this new programme. The teacher is considered to be the alter ego of the success of the UBE programme because the teacher is the one at the point of execution. According to the implementation guidelines for the UBE programme "Government is committed to ensuring the success of the UBE and the teacher will therefore always be a major part of the process of its conceptualization, planning and its execution". (FGN 1999). Again teachers are consistently the best advocates for and constructive critics of any programme relating to their professional development. This combination of advocacy and critique is a powerful tool for appraising the challenges of the UBE programme in general and Ika South in particular.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The challenges of the Universal Basic Education programme are peculiar to all attempts towards the democratization and universalization of education in Nigeria. These attempts are usually geared towards consumption that is characterized by literacy, numeracy and effective communication. Majority of the products of this education policy do not fulfill this characterization. Government usually come up with this policy to prove a political point-being the only government that gives consideration to the education of the less privileged and middle class children in our society. The logic is that Nigeria is an identity society where people are recognized by the amount of authority they wield and of wealth they possessed. In our society, laws and policies are not vigorously pursued, except where it would add feather to the caps of the advocates of such programme or policy. The Nigerian state has made several attempts at democratization and universalisation of education, particularly at the primary education level, but all to no avail. With the emergence of the UBE programmes so many Nigerians are skeptical about its (UBE) nature, scope, objective as well as its execution, management, finance etc.

Purpose of the Study

The thrust of this study is to carryout an appraisal of the challenges of the UBE programme at the Primary education level in Ika South Local Government area of Delta State through a survey research design.

Significance of the Study

Societies in need of change turn to education because it is a creditable instrument that brings about such change and reconstruction in society. In other words, education is the gateway to the aspirations, expectations, developments and growth (FGN 2004). The teacher holds the key that unlocks that gate which means that the teacher must be intellectually sound, appropriate of moral conduct and possessor of competent skills that would enable him discharge his duties effectively (Anikweze, Ojo and Maiyanga, 2002 and Ukeje 1991). The teacher as the possessor of the key to the gate...

of making Education For All (EFA) a reality by recognizing the concept, aims and objectives and challenges posed by the UBE programme. The UBE programme cannot afford to fail at this attempt of democratization of the lower level of the education system. Because democratization of education as an institution ought to be the business of all stakeholders in the education industry, ranging from the individual learners, family, community, associations, corporate organizations, state and federal ministries of education, Local Government education authorities to faculties, institutes and colleges of education.

Research Questions

1. Are there available and or adequate physical facilities for the effective implementation of the programme at the Primary school level in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State?
2. What is the level of awareness, mobilization, and motivation of teachers and school heads in Ika South Local Government Area towards the Primary education level of the UBE programme?
3. How realistic and consistent are government policies towards the UBE programme at the primary education level in the studied L.G.A.
4. What is the level of Mobilization and socialization of the other stakeholders in education industry towards the programme at the primary school level in the studied LGA?
5. What is the level of funding of the UBE programme in this level in the LGA?
6. Are there available and reliable data or statistics for effective planning of the programme at the primary education level in the LGA?

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was employed in this study to enable the researchers to ascertain and appraise the challenges confronting the primary education aspect of the UBE programme in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. The school administrators (head masters and assistant headmasters) and service teachers in the fifty six (56) primary schools during the 2006/2007 academic sessions were used to carryout this study. All the school administrators were used since each school has one headmaster and an assistant headmaster, which total one hundred and twelve (112) while the service teachers were randomly selected through a random table. The department of Planning, Research and Statistics of the Local Government Education Authority Ika South Local Government made available to these researchers the monthly Returns for the month of February 2007. The monthly Return schedule provide the researchers with all the names of the teachers in the fifty six (56) primary schools in Ika South Local Government Area. The monthly Returns of the various schools were arranged alphabetically, through the random table. One hundred subjects were selected, making the total sample of the study to be two hundred and twelve (212) subjects. For the survey, two sets of questionnaire were employed. A demographic questionnaire which was designed to gather data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, working experience, higher educational level, number of sponsored inservice programme attended and a ten (10) item structured questionnaire, with Likert-scale options; strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was administered to the subjects. The items give consideration to the following areas, pupils enrolment, teacher supply and demand, physical facilities, mobilization and socialization, teachers salaries and wages, planning and instability in government policies and programmes. The researchers through the help of the school administrator/ or service teachers, as the case may be, who came to submit their schools' monthly Returns assisted in administering the questionnaires to the subjects selected for this study. All the questionnaires were returned to the office of Planning, Research and Statistics after a forth-night. Two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were returned with two (2) missing. The questionnaires that were returned were sufficient for this study. Each positive item in the questionnaire was scored in this order: SA (4), A (3), D (2) and SD (1). Each item of the questionnaire was analyzed using the mean and standard deviation of the responses of the respondents. A mean of 2.50 was taken as the minimum score an item would obtain to be accepted. Any item below the cut off point of 2.50 was rejected.

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Characteristics	No	%
Age		
18 – 34	53	25.2
35 – 44	93	44.3
45 – 54	47	22.4
55 and above	17	8.1

An Appraisal of the Challenges of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State

Gender		
Male	98	46.7
Female	112	53.3
Marital Status		
Single	66	31.4
Married	144	68.6
Highest Education Obtained		
Ph.D	1	0.5
M.Ed, MSc, MA	38	18.1
B.Sc, BA, B.Ed	72	34.3
NCE	92	43.8
TC. II	7	3.3
WASC	-	-
Teaching Experience		
0 – 2 years	23	11.0
2 – 5 years	47	22.4
6 – 10 years	64	30.5
11 – 15 years	45	21.4
16 – 20 years	15	7.1
21 – 25 years	11	5.2
> 26 years	5	2.4
No of sponsored inservice programmes attended		
None	73	34.8
≤ 2	100	47.6
≥ 5	26	12.4
< 6	11	5.2

Table II mean and standard deviation of the rating of the appraisal of school Administrators and service teachers of the challenges of the UBE programme in Ika South L.G.A

S/No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	School administrators and service teachers are well mobilized and quite abreast of the mandate of the UBE Programme in Ika South LGA	2.06	0.96	Rejected
2	The school administrators and service teachers are well motivated in terms of salaries and wages in the LGA	1.55	0.97	Rejected
3	The pre-service training of teachers is quite adequate for them to function effectively at the Primary School level of the UBE programme in the LGA	2.54	0.95	Accepted
4	There are provisions in place in the programme for on the job training for both updating and upgrading of the competencies of service teachers.	2.24	0.95	Rejected
5	Government Policies towards the realization of the objectives of the UBE programme are adequate and consistent.	2.65	0.95	Accepted
6	There are adequate physical facilities	0.45	0.96	Rejected
7	There are adequate and reliable statistics for the effective planning of the programme	1.92	0.96	Rejected
8	The management of the programme at the three tiers of Government is effective	2.40	0.96	Rejected
9	The programme is properly funded	2.45	0.95	Rejected
10	There is effective mobilization and socialization of all stakeholders in education in Ika South LGA	2.34	0.96	Rejected

Table II showed that the overall means for two out of the ten items tested were greater than the cut off point of 2.50. This implies that only two of the items tested were accepted. The other eight were rejected.

DISCUSSION

Every policy and programme has its own inherent challenges that threatens the meaningfulness and reality of such policy and programme. Challenges are both human and material, as well as foreseen and unforeseen. The UBE programme, like every other attempts at basic education in the country has both similar and peculiar challenges. The challenges began with the Nigerian attitude and belief of being identified with historical antecedence and the inability to learn from history. The survival of a programme largely depends on the survival attitude and responsibility of both leadership and followership. Rather than the identity attitude characterized by self recognition, unhealthy poise which does not bring about the articulation and conceptualization of such programme. There is already poor understanding of the UBE programme due to inadequate awareness, mobilization and socialization to enable Nigerians come to terms with the UBE programme (see table II). According to Eya (2004) service teachers awareness and involvement in the UBE programme is very little. Ika South Local Government, a major stakeholder in the UBE programme does not know its role, how relevant and effective, it can contribute to the process of the UBE programme. Experience has also show that successive government in the Nigeria state is not committed to policies and programmes more so if they are not the initiator of such programmes. In other words, instability in government means instability in policies and programmes. The collapse of UPE, OFN, DFRR, Green Revolution, Better life for Rural Women, FSP and FEAP were all victims of political, economic and social instability in governments and policies. Nigerians should also bear in mind that even though our society is an identify society, the UBE programme is not a Federal Government Programme but a national programme which needs to be sustained and stabilized even when this Obasanjo-led government is no longer in power. Politicization of data management has also reduced many laudable and noble programmes to their barest minimum. For now all census figures have been tagged figures of controversies due to politicization of data. What data would the government use in planning for all aspects of life and in particular the UBE programme?, is a fundamental question before Government. Centralization of data due to low capacity of local level managers is also another problem in the area of data management in the country. Both local government and State Government somehow depend on the central to collect and analyze data before they can make use of such data for planning purposes. Quality assurance is fundamental to every educational system. Attempts in the past tend to separate monitoring and evaluation frame work from the execution process of basic education. In other words the problem with most of our programmes is implementation which is usually due to poor, inadequate or absolute lack of monitoring and evaluation of such programme. Obiona (n.d) points out that monitoring and evaluation is systematically built into the UBE programme to bring about quality assurance. Teacher supply and demand will surely bring about untold pressure on the entire process of implementation because to attain the desired quality of education in the country there is the need for qualified and experienced teachers in the system. Frequent strikes occasioned by absolute lack of motivation is something the system has to deal with. Teachers need to be upwardly empowered and motivated in other for the UBE programme to succeed. Teachers should be paid as at when due because the present system of deducting teachers salaries and wages from Local Government Allocation is going to be a threat to the UBE programme. Teachers' salaries and wages should be sourced from the Federation Account. Funding generally has been a major problem confronting the implementation of programmes initiated by the Government. In the past, inadequate funding has rendered noble programmes incapacitated. The Federal Government is the Primary financier of all programmes. In 1970 when it decided to abandon the UPE programme the state and Local Governments could not continue with the programme due to lack of funding. This one-way funding would be injurious to the successful implementation

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Nigerians should bear in mind that even though our society is an identify society, the UBE programme is not a Federal Government programme but a national programme which needs to be sustained and stabilized, even when this Obasanjo-led government is no longer in power. There is therefore the need to do a lot of advocacy and sensitization in order to mobilize all the stakeholders of the programme. This should be done with a view to selling the idea and making the stakeholders feel that the programme is theirs and that they are part and parcel of it.
- ii. Teachers are the main determinants of any educational reforms. According to the implementation guidelines for the UBE programme; "Teachers emoluments will be paid regularly and will be kept at a level that is commensurate with the professional nature of teaching, while other incentives and welfare packages will be negotiated, steps will be taken to make the school environment learner - friendly as well as teacher-friendly. This involves the provision of appropriate forms of infrastructure and facilities,

An Appraisal of the Challenges of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State

gain saying the fact that if these are faithfully implemented, it will motivate the teachers and this will eventually rub on their efficiency and productivity.

There are multiplicity of agencies and organs involved in the implementation of the UBE programme these include National Council on UBE headed by the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with State Governors as members, Federal Ministry of Education, office of the National Coordinator UBE, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Local Government Council, Schools, the Community, etc. There is need to define work roles and administrative mechanism that will ensure organizational conduct, coordination and control of work activities among these agencies and organs. In previous attempt at democratization and universalization of education work roles activities were not define and streamlined, consequently there were difficulties in the implementation of programmes. This was the case during the era of the active NPEC when there was poor streamlining of the relationship between the LGA and LGEA; SPEBS and LGA; MOE and SPEB and NPEC and State Governments and other forms of administrative problems

CONCLUSION

The UBE programme is our hope of developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion of ensuring that free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age. This according to the UBE mission statements should be a prime energizer of a National movement for actualization of the Nation's Universal Basic Education vision, working in concert with all tiers of government, Teachers' Unions Parent – Teacher Associations, NGO'S, Development partners, the private sector and all classes of the civil society, thus mobilizing the nation's creative energies to ensure that education for all becomes the business of all, patriotically assuming ownership of UBE and doggedly ensuring its unqualified success UBE (2002). This makes the UBE a national project and all hands must be on deck to sustain it and make it a reality.

REFERENCES

- Agaaku, M.M. (2003) *Universal Basic Education Programme: Problems and Prospects*. Being Guest Paper Presented at the National Conference on Management of Primary Education in Nigeria. Benue Hotels, Markudi, December, 4 & 5.
- Anikweze, C.M. Ojo, M.O. and Maiyanga, A.A. (2002). *Teacher Education in Nigeria – Reflections of Dr Kabiru Isyaku*, Abuja, PRS Department, NCCE, pp 23 – 34, 117 – 130.
- Eya, P. (2004). *The Extent of Primary School Teachers' Awareness and Involvement in Universal Basic Education* in Enugu Urban Areas <http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/aern/teaware.html>. January, 29.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000) *Implementation guidelines for the UBE programme*. Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Federal.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) *National Policy on Education*, 4th Edition, Lagos, NERDC.
- Local Government Education Authority (2006) *Monthly Returns schedule Agbor, Department of Planning, Research and Statistics*, February.
- Obanya, P. (2000). *UBE As a Necessary Step. Lead Paper presented at National Conference on UBE Programme in Nigeria*, FCE (T). Asaba, 8th May.
- Obioma, G. (nd). *Challenges of Implementing the UBE programme at Federal, State and Local Government Levels*.
- Ukeje, B. O. (1991). *The Education of Teachers for a new social order. "The Nigerian Teacher Today"*. 1(1), NCCE, pp 4 –12.
- Yoloye, E.O. (1992). *The Management of human resources for the Primary education system in Nigeria in a period of economic reconstruction*. In A Adaralegbe (ed). "Education in Nigeria: Teacher Education for the 6-3-3-4 system. The Management of Human and Material Resources for Education. Proceedings of the 1989 & 1990 Conference of the Nigeria Academy of Education.