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PROVISION OF VIABLE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION(UBE):A PANANCEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Universal Basic Education was launched in 1999 by the former President, Olusegun Obasanjo. The aim was to eradicate illiteracy in the country. Basic Education embraced all kinds of knowledge and skills necessary for an individual to live a UBEful, local government are involved in the management of the programme. Despite the efforts of government to provide a viable UBE programme, it is bedeviled by some obstacles which include - lack of adequate funds, inadequate educational facilities, inadequate supervision and lack of incentives to the teachers and supervisors. For the realization of the laudable objectives of UBE the following recommendations have been made: Provision of adequate qualified staff, provision of adequate funds, provision of reliable data for the planners and provision of adequate infrastructural facilities.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation upon which physical, mental, economic, political, social and environmental development of an individual is built. It is the stronghold of every nation that aspires to greater heights in its entire growth and development. Thus UNESCO at its 27th session of the General Congress, sees education as a tool-for the development of all human potential which is the most powerful tool for shaping the future. Omokhodion and Pemedede (2000) supported the idea by stating that education is a vital key for solving social and economic problems confronting man in his setting. Despite the importance of education, it has remained in a pathetic and epileptic state in Nigeria. Infact, education is in crisis in Nigeria. According UNICEF, while primary and secondary enrolment in Nigeria stood at 23.210,576 in 1999, about 4,000,000 Nigerian children



have no access to basic education. Majority of those that enrolled in the schools were given sub-standard education. About 43% of the nations population falls within the age bracket of 6-15 years. This signifies that out of the estimated 135 million population, about 58.05 million are of school age. Over 70% of school age children lacks access to quality school, because of poverty. It was based on this that Universal Basic Education was launched In September 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo with the hope to give basic education to all Nigerian children who are of age. Okeke (2006) states that it was in recognition of the prevalence of the deteriorating and undesirable situation in Nigeria Educational system, that Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme was established as an integral part of the national education structure. The mid-eighties witnessed a renewed effort and determination to achieve basic education for all. The concept of universal Basic Education changes from country to country, In Nigerian context, basic education include; the six-years primary education, three years of junior secondary school, non-formal education, adult education and nomadic education. It is believed that this progranime will move Nigeria as a nation towards catching up with the trends of globalization and industrialization. Basic education goes beyond illiteracy and numeracy. It encompasses all kinds of basic knowledge and skills necessary for an individual to live a useful and contented life. Okeke (2006) opines that basic education is a new facilitative education, culture intended to engender In children and youth a scientific outlook and rudimentary understanding of the national and social environment on one hand and promote adult literacy and continuing education on the other hand. This is to help develop their basic skills in child parenting family management, civil participation and effective mathematics and natural science and technology. In this cycle, curriculum design and programme implementation problems are more complicated.

The UBE Act

The Universal Basic Education Act was enacted by the National Assembly in 2004. The Act has four parts which include: Part One: Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education (made up of 6 sections)

- (i) Federal Government intervention for uniform and qualitative basic education.
- (ii) Right of a child to compulsory free education.
- (iii) Services in public primary and junior secondary schools are free of charge.
- (iv) Duty of a parent to ensure the education of his child.
- (v) Section 2 and 3 not applicable to a child living outside Nigeria.
- (vi) Magistrate courts to have jurisdiction over certain offences

Part Two



- (i) Establishment and membership of the Universal Basic Education Board
- (ii) Tenure of office (iii) Functions of the commission
- (iv) Appointment of executive secretary and other staff of the commission.

Part Three

Financing of the Universal Basic Education

Part Four

- (a) Establishment of state Universal Basic Education Board
- (b) Establishment of Local Government Education Authority.
- (c) Repeal of cap 271 LFN 1990 and transitional provision
- (d) Interpretation
- (e) Citation

The Objectives of UBE Scheme

The UBE scheme has laudable objectives which include:

- (i) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- (ii) The provision of Free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- (iii) Reducing drastically the incident of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- (iv) Catering for school drop-outs and out of school children/adolescents through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education
- (v) 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.

UBE Management Structure

Akinkugbe (2003) in Ifelunni (2006) states that the management structure of UBE involves the three tiers of government(federal, state and local governments).

The Federal Government:

- Initiates and launched the progmmme
- Provides minimum standards and guidelines for its operation
- Provides general oversight and monitoring.
- Mobilizes domestic and international support for the programme.
- Initiates and intervenes in crucial areas of need for the success of UBE.
- Provides support for core national institutions for implementing key aspects of the programmes such as:
 - National Teachers Institute(NTI)for the Pivotal Training Programme (PTTP).National Institute for Ecucational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) for capacity building of educational administrators and planners.
 - Federal Inspectorate Service (FLS) for quality control



- The National Institute for Nigerian Language(MINLAN)for training and retaining of teachers in Nigerian language.
- The National Commission for Nomadic Education(NCNE) for the education of nomads.
- The National Mass Commission NMEC) for the implementation of the adult and non-formal education component of the UBE programme.

At the State level:

State government,

- Formulates policies for UBE
- See to the day to day running of the programme
- Recruit, discipline and promote teachers on grade level 07 and above,
- Pay the salaries of junior secondary school teachers.
- Establish and maintain state universal basic education boards and other state level agencies.

At Local Government level

- Establish and maintain local government authorities.
- See day-to-day operations of the programme.
- Recruit, discipline and promote teachers and other primary school level staff.
- Pay the salaries of primary school teachers.

For the success of the UBE programme, the universal basic education commission (UBEC) has also been established and the commission is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Prescribe minimum standards for education throughout the country
- Co-ordinate, supervise and monitor the implementation of the UBE programme.
- Initiate and monitor the execution of specific programme for the attainment of UBE objectives after consultation with all state government and stake holders.
- Sensitize and mobilize stakeholders for their effective involvement and participation in the UBE programme.
- Collate, analyze and publish information relating to basic education in Nigeria.
- Carry out regular personnel audit in each state of the federation. Disburse UBE funds to states, local government and other federal government agencies that are implementing any aspect of the UBE programme based on approved guidelines.
- Carry out other such activities that are relevant to the discharge of its functions.



A management team was also inaugurated and this was headed by UBE National Co-ordinator who manages the programme.

The programme has different departments which include:

- (I) Planning, research and statistics
- (II) Monitoring and evaluation
- (III) Teachers training and curriculum development
- (IV) Social mobilization
- (V) Administration and supplies
- (VI) Finance and accounts

Planning for manpower development and utilization for UBE programme

Odor (1995) sees staff development as the process of training, retraining and improvement of staff members in organizations for the purpose of acquiring more academic or professional qualifications, knowledge, skills and competencies for increase of efficiency in their primary functions. Musaaazi (1982) opines that staff development means that provisions should be made by the education authorities to improve the performance of staff. According to Ifelunni (2006) manpower development and utilization refers to the sum of total effort of recruiting, training, motivating and utilization of staff. The achievement of the stated objectives of UBE is determined by the quality of teachers who are indispensable in the entire educational system. Basic education is aimed at equipping citizens with knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them:

- (a) Live meaningful and fulfilled lives
- (b) Contribute to the development of the society.
- (c) Derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society
- (d) Discharge their civic obligations competently.

This implies that universal basic education aims at giving the citizenry all round development. And the only way to realize these laudable objectives is by empowering the teachers through training, workshops, seminars and conferences. The provision of in-service training will make education to be more strategic, more creative, and innovative in their teaching process which will make teachers to create suitable classroom environments for the effective teaching/learning to take place. The management structure of UBE revolves round the federal, state and local governments in manpower development, recruiting and payment of teachers' salary. The federal government has not relented in her effort to ensure adequate manpower supply for the success of the UBE scheme. Education reform of 2003, reports that the National teachers institute (NTI) Kaduna is already implementing the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP). The report



further states that the training is being done through the Distance Learning System (DLS). The first batch of candidate enrolled under PTTTP programme of the NTI is over 28,542 teachers. Presently over 30,000 students-teachers are undergoing training in over 392 centres across the 34 participating states and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Ifelunni, 2006). The federal government through the NTI also organized one-week in-service training nationwide to prepare the teachers for the task ahead of them. The in-service education exposed teachers to new course materials, oral and written test, curricula issues and teaching methodologies as well as such other issues as teacher-student relations and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). A lot of efforts are being made by the federal government to train adequate and qualified teachers for the UBE programmes and this has created opportunity for many citizens of the country to develop economically.

UBE and sustainable development

UBE programme has very laudable objectives and if attained can lead to all round development of the citizenry:- Politically, economically, technologically, morally, socially, physically and intellectually. The UBE scheme when properly implemented is expected to benefit three distinct categories of people, namely those who undergo:

- (a) Formal basic education encompassing the first nine years of primary and junior secondary education.
- (b) Nomadic education for school age children of pastoral nomads and migrant fishermen
- (c) Literacy and non-formal education for out-of-school youth and illiterate adults. (Maduewesi. 2005)

Ochoma (2006), states that adult education which is part of UBE IS relevant in the following areas:

- (a) Developing in individuals a sense of self-realization and actualization as it enhances the individuals development mentally, socially, spiritually etc The individuals stability, mentally is assured and he becomes intellectually alert to face the challenges of his time.
- (b) Developing in the individual a sense of responsibility and knowledge of how to proceed in making personal adjustment to home life and family relationships.
- (c) Making individuals economically viable as it encourages the development of skills both technically and professionally.
- (d) Averting the possibility of an individual relapsing into illiteracy by regularly exposing him to literature
- (e) Enabling individuals to be able to utilize their leisure time profitably for rewarding activities and experiences.

- (f) Ensuring confidence in individuals which enables them discharge their civic, social political economic and religious responsibilities most suitably thereby fostering a vision of social responsibility

Therefore UBE scheme helps to liberate the adult members of a society from the snare of oppression, political victimization, ethnic chauvinism, economic dependence and perpetual ignorance and poverty. Whawo (1995) further stated that some adults may certainly require additional qualification to enable them change their jobs, secure a job or enjoy upward job mobility. Less of manual skills and more of intellectual skills of varied types are now being required of workers over years. The only way by which the adult citizen can live at peace with himself is that of continual training in formal schools. He must have a way to escape from conservative life and hold on to the philosophy of developmentalism.

Problems of the UBE

The Universal Basic Education is often referred to as old wine in a new wine skin. It is said to have recarnated from universal primary education (UPE). Thus, since the inception in September 1999, Nigerians have been discussing the constraints that are likely to obstruct the implementation. Some educationists even asserted that the problems that bedeviled the UPE scheme are likely to face the UBE scheme. Some of the challenges as documented by Obanya (2000) include

(I) Instability and lack of political will:

Nigerians have ever desired political stability. There has been instability in the institution of governance; in policy and in the composition and competence of the actors. There has been little or lack of political will to conceive, plan and implement a national educational programme in a systematic, and sustainable manner. The reason adduced for this phenomena is that those in position of authority have little regard for quantitative or qualitative education.

(II) Inadequate Planning:

Inadequate planning is as a result of dearth of data, and even the available ones are not reliable. Hence, forecasts and projections are always overtaken by events. There are usually numerous "unforeseen" and "unpredictable" circumstances in governments conduct of its affairs. Most times, the people are not carried along and as such governments affairs attract little or no involvement of the governed.

Thus, education has had its fair share of failures owing to the poor quantity and quality of inputs, which include:

- Inadequate teacher supply
- Poor upgrading facilities for personnel



- Poor infrastructure
- Inadequate/inappropriate materials
- Negative impact on access, retention, efficiency and equality.

Other problems facing the UBE programme include:

- Inadequate funds:** It is obvious that the UBE scheme will require a huge capital outlay for its successful implementation. And the problem of lack of data and unreliability which lead to under-estimation and sometime, over-estimation .has also magnified the problem,
- Irregular payment of Teachers salaries:** Teachers are facing the problem of irregular payment of salaries. Their salaries are not paid as at when due, and this has created laxity among them. They now have lukewarm attitude towards their teaching responsibilities and obligations.
- Inadequate supervision of UBE programme:** Supervision of UBE programme is not adequately carried out. Thus standards are not uniformly maintained throughout the federation. Lack of supervisors, results to the abandoning of duties by the teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discourse, the following recommendations have been made;

- The budgetary allocation UBE programmes should be increased to cater for the various programmes.
- There should be regular payment of teacher's salaries.
- Incentives should be given to both teachers and supervisors.
- Infrastructural facilities should be made available to the teachers and the pupils.
- Government should recognize the importance of education and should not be UBE as a sacrificial lamb by politicians.
- Proper planning should always be put in place before execution.
- Strategies should be map out to get reliable data for educational planners
- There is need to professionalized teaching so that the quacks in the profession will be eliminated.
- The spirit of maintaining government facilities should be imbibed into those in education industry.
- Guidance and counseling units should be established in the various institutions of learning.

CONCLUSION

UBE scheme has laudable objectives. The achievement of these objectives



will lead to all round development of the learners which include physical, social, spiritual, intellectual, economical and political development. Some strategies have been suggested to tackle the challenges of the UBE programme, among which are provision of adequate funds, provision of educational facilities, provision of adequate qualified teachers, provision of reliable data and adequate supervision of instructions.

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