

IMPLEMENTING THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) CURRICULUM IN A RECESSED ECONOMY

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Abstract

The study examines implementing the universal Basic Education (UBE) Curriculum for the realization of the objective of the UBE programme in a recessed economy. Today many grandaunts from Nigerian Universal Basic Education Programme are unemployed and cannot employed themselves. They are curiously idle because they lack the pre-requisite knowledge for self employment. The problem is aggravated by the current economic recession. It is therefore the opinion of this paper that for a meaningful national benefit of the objectives of the UBE programme, government and all those concern should develop ways of combating the major challenges affecting the programme. Such ways should include proper funding to enable proprietors and government to provide adequate practical skills and other facilities for effective teaching and learning. Further recommendations enumerated.

Introduction

Curriculum is a guide in an educational programme for effectiveness under the guidance of a school. In short, curriculum is the heart of education as it is the fundamental starting point of teaching, learning and understanding in Education. In other words, curriculum is a field of study that plays a key role in the training and re-training of competent learners who are to translate national goals of education into practical activities. In the words of (Okoye 2016), a curriculum study has historically remained till date the intellectual cutting edge of the whole of educational system. This is seen from the fact that the structure and dynamics of curriculum studies dictate to a very large extent the pace, quality and success of educational reforms including teacher education (Okoye, 2017). It is therefore right to claim or argue that the legitimacy, integrity and relevance of any discipline or intellectual enquiry is determined to a large extent by the core values embedded in and promoted by the philosophical and ideological frame work of its curriculum.

In summary, curriculum is from its original latin word translates to "a running", "a race" or "a course", a "race course" or "a career" Bobbit, (1918) as quoted by (Ogunyemi 2009). He sees it as a series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do things well that make up the adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be.

Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed course of study, syllabuses and subjects. This happens when all the planned learning experiences and programmes of the school in relation to all subjects offered in the school had been fine tuned and the execution of all the activities commences. In the words of Garba (2004), curriculum implementation is the process of putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed. Curriculum implementation requires the joint efforts of the government, school administrators and teachers.

Curriculum implementation is not only the efforts of teachers in translating the planned curriculum document for the benefit of the learners but also involves the effective supervision of how well the translation and execution had been effectively done for the benefit of the individuals and the education system in general. As cited by Obasi (2016), the teacher who is the professional and the student/learner who is the end consumer are both at the center of curriculum implementation.

Curriculum Implementation in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was established to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a 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 improve 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 complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical moral and civic value needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life long learning.

The basic education level is a 9- year basic Education programme which encompasses primary one to six and junior secondary one to three. The programme is free, universal and compulsory to all children within the age bracket of 6-15 years. The curriculum at any level, is a structured series of intended learning experiences which embraces purposeful experience provided and directed by educational institutions to achieve predetermined goals. The UBE places strong emphasis on skill training and acquisition, which is very important in this era of unemployment. The skill training and acquisition will equip the child to face the challenges of life in and outside the school and to contribute meaningfully to the nation through the application of the required skills.

In general, the Basic Education curriculum reflects depth, appropriateness, and interrelatedness of the curricular contents. Included also are value orientation, peace and dialogue as well as human rights education, family life/HIV and AIDS education, entrepreneurial skills among others are fused into the relevant contents. Again, the curriculum pays particular attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development goals (MDGs) and the critical elements of the National Economic Empowerment and Development strategies (NEEDS) (FGN 2007). Furthermore, the National Policy on Education (2004) gave a blue print into the necessity of training youths for gainful employment so that the goal of eradication of poverty and unemployment be achieved.

However, an in dept assessment of the economy of Nigeria presents a disparaging picture of subsistence and dependence that are contingent upon the beacons of imperialism and neocolonialism driven by multinational (Okeke and Ekpe 2002). What we experience in the nations economy is a high level of exploration and exploitation, bringing about tales of social, economic, cultural and political domination, despair as well as degradation of the highest order. The Universal Basic Education Curriculum was aimed increasing coherence between different aspects of school practices providing a more focused big picture of teaching and learning at the lower level of schooling. Hence, an appraisal of the copious problems associated with Global Economic crisis under which the fine goals of the UBE curriculum will be implemented is the major focus of this work.

What is Economic Recession?

A recession is when the economy declines significantly for at least six months. This means there is a drop in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales. Investopedia (2017), quoting the National Bureaus for Economic Research (NBER), defines economic recession as follows:

A recession is a significant decline in activity across the economy, lasting longer than a few months. It is visible in industrial production, employment, real income and whole –retail

trade. The technical indicator is two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth as measured by a country's gross domestic product (GDP).

According to them, recession is a normal, albeit unpleasant part of business cycle. This unpleasant part of business cycle is usually caused by many factors such as:

- i. High inflation leading to a general rise in the price of goods and services leading to a consequential fall in purchasing power.
- ii. High interest rate and this discourage investments.
- iii. Mass unemployment and general loss of confidence in government
- iv. Trade deficit.
- v. Poor economic planning.
- vi. Poor implementation of plans amongst so many others.

These results in skyrocketing of consumer prices, high unemployment, problem of foreign exchange, budget deficit, public debt, etc. In short in a difficult economy, everything seems so BLACK and WHITE as small business owners can neither survive or operate well.

Nigeria as a nation has felt the impact of this economic recession that is witnessed worldwide. The nation has introduced a number of measures as a means to stay afloat this economic crunch. Such measures as quoted by Udoka (2010) are "value Added Tax" (VAT), "Liquidation of capital market" "privatization" "right-sizing" "wealth creation" etc were common parlance in the national economic language. In the midst of all these efforts there is still a general fear that implementation of the Universal basic Education (UBE) may be a great task.

The Challenges

Various reasons have been envisaged which are likely to hinder the implementation of UBE curriculum. From the views expressed by many scholars such as Ezeocha (1990), Ikeje (1992), Onyeagwu (2017) Oghuvbu (2017); some of the challenges include:

1. **Excess staff workload:** As a result of unemployment coupled with increasing population in our classrooms few available teachers are made to work in excess
2. **Poor funding:** Under funding has become a culture in Nigeria. Money is never enough largely because of the value our leaders place on people's education.

Funding is central to the overall development of education in general. According to Olaitan (1996) as quoted by Idiaghe (2011) no educational programme can be successful in the face of inadequate funding. Again, finance is a major determinant factor for provision of educational facilities and many other materials required in the teaching/learning process. Where this fund is available, dishonesty and insincerity become the order of the day on those in charge. This has resulted to poor planning both from government and administrators.

Specifically, the reform of introducing UBE programme was aimed at ensuring the minimum acceptable international standards of education for all and excellence in both tutoring and learning of skills by students who will be seen as future innovators and industrialists of Nigeria. The contents of these reform portray government's intention and action, that are poised to leaving a legacy in the history of the nation's economy. The actual realization of the goals of these programmes become an issue of utmost concern. The major or common problem confronting the UBE programme in Nigeria has been lack of funds or poor funding. Sadly enough, government has not provided funds to secure the needed materials for full implementation of the programme.

3. **Dearth of Instructional Materials:** In recent times, teachers have indicated that one of the major problems to curriculum implementation is lack of adequate instructional materials. These materials are to aid teachers for effective teaching and learning. Nwoji (2002) as quoted by Afangideh (2009), views instructional materials as devices that facilitate the transmission to a learner, the facts, skills, attitude and values which promotes understanding and appreciation of concepts.

4. The availability of adequate instructional materials aids in effective implementation of curriculum. Unfortunately, there is dearth of instructional materials in basic Education level. The major cause of this is lack of funds as the cost of the materials are high and because education is poorly funded, many if not all of Nigerians public schools lack adequate instructional materials. This has resulted to poor teaching and learning bringing about poor learning attitude of students.
5. **Poor Programme Implementation:** The UBE schemes as well as many other educational policies in Nigeria suffered from the problem of poor or ineffective implementation. In most cases, the policies and programmes of the UBE were sound in terms of targets to be reached and means of reaching those targets. But as the programme is being implemented, there is a breakdown somewhere along the line. Idiaghe (2011) quoting Cox (1996) and Mutic (1994) have argued that the main problem confronting education in the developing countries are the inability to coordinate and effectively manage available resources.
6. **Enrolment upsurge:** The continuing increase in the number of children born into the society have been an interesting story. enrolment of children into schools has remained higher than the system's physical capacity to accommodate students just as demand for access grow faster than budgets.
7. The awareness of the advantages of education has contributed to overcrowded classrooms as everybody wants to go to school to be educated and even with government making education to be compulsory at the UBE level. In most of the primary schools a class is made up of 50-60 pupils when a class is expected to be between 15-20 pupils for effective teaching and learning. In this type of situation, it is evident that the available space is over stretched and teachers are made to be overworked.
8. **Evaluation of learning:** Evaluation procedure is a necessary tool in curriculum implementation. A good and well ordered evaluation procedure focuses on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviours of learners. The procedure must be valid and reliable for them to be useful to the educational system. But what we witness is the lack of adequate evaluation where evaluation these days is based only on cognitive aspect while the affective / psychomotor domains are hardly assessed. This could be as a result of teachers not mastering the continuous assessment skills. All these affect curriculum implementation as no adequate evaluation is carried out.

Other challenges include:

1. Insufficient motivation of teachers
2. Frequent change in government
3. Poor parental interference
4. Teachers compromise on their responsibility
5. Absence of adequate monitoring strategy amongst others.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the global economic crisis and the challenges of curriculum implementation in UBE. The UBE programme is an expression of the strong desire of the government to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry (Obayan, 2000). But in Nigeria, there has never been a record of successful implementation of UBE curriculum even before the current global economic recession or meltdown. Though the country had put in place a number of programmes to salvage the situation but such programmes died prematurely. It is sad to say that Nigeria is not making a conscious effort at revamping the proper implementation of the UBE programme. The introduction of the Universal Basic Education Programme calls for training and re-training of skilled and experienced teachers as it is on the teacher that the key factor of curriculum implementation rest.

Recommendations

Based on the problems enumerated above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and proprietors should be willing to invest reasonable proportion of her income in developing human capital, training and re-training as well as recruitment of teachers.
2. Government should ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of the UBE programmes in both public and private schools.
3. It is a known fact that the effect of technology on the nations educational positioning can help to increase the expected quality of her students. Therefore the educational sector should be equipped with every technical equipments as this is a sure way of increasing output.
4. Educational planners should consider the issue of newness of the new subjects as contained in UBE programme and the need for the provision of relevant textbooks for the use of teachers and students
5. *The nations higher institutions should develop courses with relevant potentials to train manpower for the programme to excel.*
6. *Government should recognize that a growing economy thrives on a vibrant private sector in which firms are able to make investments, creating jobs and improving productivity thereby creating more wealth for the nation.*

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