Perceived Impact Of Universal Basic Education On National Development In Nigeria

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Abstract
The effectiveness of basic education to eradicate or reduce level of illiteracy as well as enhance development has been an issue of concern to all the stakeholders of basic education. This has been one of the reasons for the introduction of Universal Basic Education in place of the former Universal Primary Education in Nigeria. Therefore, this study sought the impact of UBE programme on National Development vis – a – vis social, cultural and political development in Nigeria. The descriptive research design was adopted for carrying out the research work. 1000 participants that cut across students, teachers, parents and staff of SUBEB were sampled. A self-designed validated questionnaire was used to collect the data. Five (5) research questions were generated while data were analysed through descriptive statistics. The findings revealed a remarkable departure from the former UPE programme in the present UBE programme, provision of infrastructure though not adequate at present and devotion of adequate fund by the government though with no transparency in the disbursement of such UBE fund among others. The study concluded that UBE has been contributing to the National Development especially with its scope, objectives/aims, implementation and services being quite different from those of the former programme (UPE). It was recommended that the present administration should endeavour to build and consolidate on the implementation of UBE, and provide adequately some essential facilities like libraries, laboratories and play materials (in the early years) that would make the programme to adequately contribute to national development.

Introduction
Education, needless to say, is a priority sector in every well-meaning society. Thus, Burtch (2006) referred to it as a major force in economic, intellectual, social and cultural empowerment. Its value in bringing about character and attitudinal change ranks as important as its ability to reshape human potentials for desired development. The education given by the colonial masters was tailored towards white-collar job and this did not contribute meaningfully to Nigerian educational business venture according to the critics of the system. Hence, the idea of introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the regional government of Western Nigeria in 1955. This too failed woefully.

Later in 1976, UPE was reintroduced in the country at national level on Monday 6th, September by the Olusegun Obasanjo Military Administration at the Oke Sunna Municipal Primary School, Lagos to provide free and compulsory education to children at the primary school level. Unfortunately, because of several unanticipated problems such as enrolment explosion, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities among others that emerged in the early stages of the implementation of the scheme the programme failed to achieve the objectives.
At the advent of democratic governance and inauguration of the Olusegun Obasanjo Administration in May, 1999, the government made education one of its priorities by introducing Universal Basic Education (UBE). The UBE scheme was put in place to improve on the limitations of Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the 1970s. The scheme was flagged off on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto State by the former President.

The specific objectives of the UBE scheme as stated by the Federal Ministry of Education (1999) are:

(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 age.

(iii) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through relevance, quality and efficiency).

(iv) 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

(v) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level 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.

Fabunmi (2004) intimated that the programme was conceived as a response to the level of awareness and general education of the populace. The UBE scheme was introduced in order to take care of the large population of the disadvantaged groups, the rural community, the girl child, the nomadic, the disabled, the almajiri and the phenomenon of boys drop-out. The welfare of the teachers is another paramount importance, because it is from them that the standard and enhanced learning achievement can be restored. UBE was introduced so that teacher’s involvement in curriculum development, in societal mobilization and in the over all educational decision-making process will be improved. The programme was also packaged to make school environment learner friendly by providing appropriate forms of infrastructure and facilities, and recognizing the professional autonomy of teachers and school administrators.

With the introduction of Universal Basic Education, it is believed that development of Nigeria will be accelerated because of inherent value in education. Attesting to this, Preece (2006) submitted that education is a proven contributor to reducing poverty. As the UNESCO IIEP (2002:25) document states:

Education has been shown to have an impact on individual workforce outcomes such as a higher income, but the impact is greater than that literacy and formal schooling are linked with reduced fertility rates, improved health and sanitation practices and an increased ability to access information and participate in various social and economic processes. Educated parents also tend to invest more in children schooling, health/nutrition, and human capital measures important for future well-being.

The evidence indicates that basic education affects not only wages but also broader workforce outcome, such as participation in the formal labour market, work in more modern sectors, and (particularly for women) the ability to earn regular income from work (Spohr, 2002).
Statement of the Problem

For any nation to minimize illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate the pace of national development, political consciousness and national integration, there is need to make basic education compulsory for the populace. Having recognized this fact, Nigeria introduced Universal Basic Education about nine years ago. The study therefore, investigated the perceived contribution of Universal Basic Education to National Development in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the perceived contributions of Universal Basic Education to national development in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study include the following:

1. To find out if Universal Basic Education (UBE) departed from the failure of Universal Primary Education (UPE);
2. To find out if necessary infrastructures have been put in place for successful implementation of the programme;
3. To verify the funding arrangement put in place whether it is adequate or no;
4. To inquire if there is necessary manpower for a successful execution of the scheme; and
5. To find out if the programme has contributed to national development so far.

Education and National Development

It is a general belief that education plays a vital means in achieving development in all ramifications. In many countries, education has provided one dependable leverage for national development (http://www1.worldbank.org/disted/policy/national/leg-02.html). In this regard, education and training have continued to be given a very high priority in countries’ National Development Plans in order to educate and prepare enough people to fill middle and high level positions in the private and public sectors of the economy. This is because, the production of sufficient numbers of secondary and university graduates with the required skills, knowledge and expertise for filling the middle and high level positions to prop the modern dynamic economy remains a challenge to educational planners (Tostensen and Scott, 1987). It should be noted that primary education serves as foundation to the other two levels of education (i.e, secondary and tertiary).

Raji (2004) described education as both a social and private good. It is an investment that is capable of yielding benefits that have some externalities. Education and training are the main instruments available to government and the community to prepare individuals for a rapidly changing, increasingly demanding world of work, and to improve their employability. This is why scholars of economics of education and educational planning continue to link investments in education to national development. Perhaps, it was this belief that led to the global declaration of Education for All (EFA) in 1990 in Jomtien Thailand (Fabunmi, 2004). This culminated the Nigeria emphasis in provision of basic education for all and which has to be compulsory.

Basic Education is the foundation for sustainable life long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills (FME 1999). Basic education refers to early childhood and pre-primary education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education and basic functional literacy for out-of-school children, youths and adults. It comprises a
wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy.

**Nigerian’s National and International Antecedents and Commitments to the Universal Basic Education Programmes**

The regional practices before independence and concern for widening educational base and re-shaping of the educational pyramid led to the experiments in Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of the 1950s. The first was by the defunct Western Region of Nigeria in 1955. The second attempt was by the government of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria in 1957, which was generally dismissed as a failure (Nwagwu, 1976). These two attempts were regional. The first attempt at the national level was the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976. The programme ran into all sorts of insurmountable difficulties soon after it was introduced and therefore hit the rock. The scheme was crippled by lack of baseline data. However, between 1979 and 1983, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the ruling party on the Western part of the country then reintroduced free education at all levels in their states. There are international antecedents associated with Nigeria’s Universal Basic Education. These include; The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights under which the right of every one to education was emphasized and with particular reference to basic education.

The 1968 Paris Conference on the World Education Crisis which led to publication of the well known book on the subject by Philip Coombs and the establishment of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). Also, the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education For All (EFA).

In addition, there have been a number of follow-up conferences to that of Jomtien, and Nigeria is a signatory to all of them. Some of such conferences are:

(ii) The 1991 Ouagadougou Declaration on Education for women and girls.
(vi) The Recite (Brazil) Declaration on the pursuit of the New Delhi goals on the massive reduction of illiteracy.
(vii) The 2000 Dakar Recommendations on the pursuit of the Jomtien.

The Universal Basic Education Programme was launched by the formal President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto on 29th September 1999. It is intended to provide a nine-year free and compulsory education that covers primary and junior secondary school as well as nomadic and adult education.

**Objectives of Universal Basic Education**

According to the implementation Guidelines, the principal objectives are stated as being, Intended to remove all obstacles to life-long education for million of Nigerian citizens (FME, 1999).

In more specific terms, UBE programme is intended to achieve the following principal objectives:
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 incidence of drop-out from formal system (through improved relevance quality and efficiency);

(iv) 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; and

(v) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level 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.

Just like objectives of the Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action on Education For All, Basic Education is not defined in terms of year of schooling, neither is it limited to formal schooling. The broad aim therefore is to give a solid foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning-to-learn, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills (Federal Ministry of Education, 1999:3).

Basic Education and National Development

Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) defined national development as the improvement of a country’s productive capacity through changes in social attitude, values and behaviour and finally, changes toward social and political equality and eradication of poverty. Earlier studies (Denison, 1962; Akangbou, 1985; 1986; 1987; Longe, 1999, Fabunmi and Akinwumiju, 2002, and Fabunmi, 2004) revealed a strong and positive relationship between investment in education and national development while Adu (2004) recommended that if UBE will contribute meaningfully to our educational development, teachers have to be creative, innovative and inspiring, teaching materials should be adequate and well utilized; facilities such as school buildings, desks, tables, chairs, water, electricity, library and access roads need to be made available.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered by the study:

(1) Is there any remarkable departure from the failed UPE?

(2) Have necessary infrastructures been put in place for successful execution?

(3) Is the funding arrangement put in place for the programme adequate?

(4) Is there necessary manpower for a successful execution?

(5) Has the programme contributed to the social, economic and political development so far and Oyo State in particular?

Methodology

The population of the study include staff of Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUPEB), primary school teachers, students as well as parents in Oyo State, Nigeria. Oyo State being one of the 36 states of the federation, is also controlled by the ruling party at the federal level (the People’s Democratic Party; PDP). It is one of the largest states in the
country and found in the western part. Through multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 1000 participants consisting of 30 SUPEB staff, 250 teachers, 360 students and 360 parents was selected.

The questionnaire titled “Perceived Impact of UBE on National Development Questionnaire (PUBENDQ)” was the main instrument used for data collection it contains 25 items which sought information on the variables such as comparison between UBE and UPE scheme, status of infrastructure, funding, human resources, UBE and social, economic and political development. The instrument was both content and face validated through the assistance of experts in the field, of educational evaluation and management while its reliability was ensured through test-retest approach. The reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. The data collected was analysed through the use of descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

**Research And Discussion**

**Research Question 1:** Is there any remarkable departure from the failed UPE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean (x)</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Present UBE covers much ground than UPE.</td>
<td>437 (43.7)</td>
<td>373 (37.3)</td>
<td>150 (15.0)</td>
<td>40 (4.0)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>The objectives of UBE are more detailed.</td>
<td>427 (42.7)</td>
<td>407 (40.7)</td>
<td>136 (13.6)</td>
<td>30 (3.0)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>UBE programme is not likely to face the constraints witnessed by UPE</td>
<td>236 (23.6)</td>
<td>504 (50.4)</td>
<td>252 (25.2)</td>
<td>8 (0.8)</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The present administration has facts and figures on projects enrolment before commencement of the programme</td>
<td>150 (15.0)</td>
<td>557 (55.7)</td>
<td>280 (28.0)</td>
<td>13 (1.3)</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>UBE success is guaranteed</td>
<td>430 (43.0)</td>
<td>343 (34.3)</td>
<td>120 (12.0)</td>
<td>107 (10.7)</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.99</td>
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Table 1: UBE and UPE Compared

Table 1 reveals that there is a remarkable departure from the failed UPE programme. This could be noticed in the responses of the respondents, for instance, they agreed that present UBE covers much ground (x = 3.21), UBE has more detailed objectives (x = 3.23), it is not likely to face the problems witnessed by UPE (x = 2.95), and UBE success is guaranteed (x = 3.10). All these point to the fact that UBE is remarkably different from UPE.

**Research Question 2:** Have necessary infrastructures been put in place for successful execution of UBE Scheme?

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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean (x)</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>There is adequate furniture for the pupils.</td>
<td>327 (32.7)</td>
<td>330 (33.0)</td>
<td>307 (30.7)</td>
<td>36 (3.6)</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
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</table>
There is adequate furniture for the teachers.

The libraries are equipped with library facilities.

There is provision for functional science laboratories.

The classrooms are in commensurate with the enrolment.

Table 2: Provision of Necessary Infrastructures

Table 2 shows that the infrastructures are provided but not adequate at present. For instance, only 65.7% of the respondents agreed that the pupils have adequate furniture, this gives the mean to be 2.95 i.e. (x = 2.95), 74.4% (x = 2.87) agreed that the teachers have adequate furniture, 51.3% (x = 2.58), agreed that the libraries are well equipped, 59.7% (x = 2.65) agreed that there are available functional laboratories while 60.7% (x= 2.54), agreed that the classrooms are commensurate with the enrolment. The just average responses show that the facilities are available but not adequate.

Research Question 3

Is funding arrangement put in place for the programme adequate?

Table 3: Funding Arrangement of UBE Programme

Table 3 reveals that though government devoted adequate fund to UBE programme (x = 3.00), the fund is being released as at when due (x = 2.61), the government is sincere with UBE financial policy (x = 2.84), but there is no transparency in the disbursement of UBE fund (x = 2.47) and the school is short of fund in executing some project.

Research Question 4: Is there necessary manpower for a successful execution?
Table 4: Availability of Human Resources

Table 4 reveals that there are necessary manpower for the programme because, government employed sufficient number of teachers (x = 3.24), pupil/teacher ratio is moderate (x = 2.78), the libraries are staffed with specialists (x = 2.72), and the science laboratories are also staffed with specialists (x = 2.74) qualified teachers were recruited (x = 3.15).

Table 5: UBE and Social, Economic and Political Development

Table 5 reveals that UBE has contributed to social harmony (x = 3.16), it has improved people’s political awareness (x = 3.04), it also improved productive capacities (x = 3.32), religious tolerance has been enhanced by the programme (x = 3.25) and it has improved the literacy level in the community (x = 3.16).

Discussion of Findings

Five research questions were generated based on the literature reviewed. These questions led to five findings which are discussed here in detail.

The first research question, “Is there any remarkable departure from the failed UPE? This study found that there was a remarkable departure from the failed UPE programme
because it covers much ground, it has more detailed objectives, it is not likely to face the problems witnessed by UPE and its success is guaranteed. This finding is corroborated by the submission of Rose (2007) that there is a significant shift from UPE in the present UBE programme in terms of access, introduction of early childhood education to public primary school and other services like provision of mid-day meal.

This finding could be as a result of the fact that UBE was put in place so as to add to or improve the then UPE programme. To start with, the scope of UBE in terms of number of years is more than that of UPE. UPE covered only six years of primary education but UBE covers pre-primary, primary and junior secondary education, nomadic, adult literacy and so on. The implication of this is that for anyone to claim possession of basic education now, such must have completed the junior secondary education. This extension increases the level of literacy in the country. Universal Basic Education (UBE) also has well-defined and detailed objectives. For instance, it is aimed at equipping individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of the society and discharge their civil obligations competently among others. All these have been pointing to UBE as the advanced programme to the then UPE, hence the finding cannot be discarded.

The second research question is “Have necessary infrastructures been put in place for successful execution of UBE?” This study found that the infrastructures are provided but not adequate at present. This finding reveals the extent to which the Federal Ministry of Education (1999) proposed implementation of blueprint have been carried out. It was planned in the blueprint that, additional 1.12 million pupils are to be recommended and then, additional facilities such as classrooms (28,000), more teachers (28,000) and other materials are to be provided. It has been revealed that there is adequate furniture for the pupils from which it could be inferred that there are enough classrooms, teachers also have enough furniture but facilities such as libraries, laboratories have not been adequately provided. This also could be as a result of leakages in the fund budgeted for the implementation of the programme.

The third research question is “Is the funding arrangement put in place for the programme adequate?” It was found that though government sincerely devoted adequate fund for the programme but there is no transparency in the disbursement of the UBE fund. This finding supported previous discussion. The government was aware of what it will cost to put UBE programme in the right shape and was ready to pay the price, but it is a sad news that the channel by which the money would pass through to the people that would implement the programme is full of fraud. The money that gets to the schools is so small that most of the facilities planned for could not be supplied again.

The fourth research question is “Is there necessary manpower for a successful execution of UBE programme?” This study found that there is enough necessary manpower for the successful implementation of the programme. This finding reveals how far the government had recruited teachers as proposed in the implementation blueprint FME (1999). It was planned that about 28,000 teachers would be recruited so as to have approximately 1:40 teacher – pupil ratio. It was noticed as of recent that large number of teachers were employed for the UBE programme in almost all the states in the federation. No wonder the respondents who were teachers agreed that government employed sufficient teachers for the programme. They also confirmed that the few libraries that were put in place were staffed with specialists, and so also the science laboratories. It was also confirmed that only qualified teachers were recruited unlike the case of UPE when both qualified and unqualified teachers were recruited to teach in the schools.
The last research question is “Has the programme contributed to the social, economic and political development so far, and in Oyo State in particular?” This study found out that UBE has contributed to social harmony, people’s political awareness, improved productive capacities and has promoted religious tolerance. This study is in line with the aims of the programme as stated by the FME (1999). The aim among others is to equip the recipients with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society and so on. This could be as a result of the fact that the scope, objectives and method of implementation of UBE make the programme more functional than any of its kind that has been practiced before. The programme has all that it takes to be more successful.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered, for better implementation and to make the UBE programme more effective: Since Nigeria is now getting rooted in democratic system of government, the next people in government are strictly advised not to change or stop the implementation of UBE because it has been found to be far better and more promising than the previous programmes. However, monitoring of the implementation strategies need to be put in place to ensure maximum result. Chairs, tables, classrooms provided for this programs in the states and other parts of the country are almost enough, except in some rural areas. There is a need for the government to provide more in terms of library facilities, laboratory facilities and play materials. In fact, from schools visited during the study it seems play materials are inexistent in the primary schools and knowing fully that the best method of teaching the pupils at this level is through play most especially the pre-primary level. Adequate provision should therefore be made for play materials, library facilities and laboratory facilities in order to give the pupils chances to explore their environment through their interaction with such materials.

It is also very important that a better monitoring strategy be designed for the fund released to the programme so as to ensure proper usage of such funds. It should be noted that a well-planned programme, that is well funded might be rendered ineffective through embezzlement and corruption. If all these are ensured, then, UBE programme still have more in stock to give to Nigerians in terms of national development as found in some other countries such as United States, Tanzania and so on.

Amongst the findings of the study are the remarkable departure of UBE from the failed UPE, provision of infrastructures though not adequate (e.g. libraries and laboratories), release of adequate fund but with no transparency in the disbursement, adequate provision of necessary manpower for the successful implementation of the programme and finally, enhanced social, economic and political development in the nation due to the introduction of UBE. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that, Nigerian government should be more conscious of the monitoring of UBE implementation and thus pay more attention to this area so as to ensure maximum result. More furniture should also be provided to schools in the interior parts of the country.

REFERENCES