ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract
The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme could not have been introduced at a better time than now that the nation is in dire need of all round National Development. The major objective of the UBE programme is the provision of free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6 -15 years. However, for the Universal Basic Education programme to be truly free and universal, efforts must be made to check whether those objectives of UBE are being implemented and therefore suggest the strategies that the educational administrator can adopt for a successful implementation of UBE. This paper specifically considered the Administrative strategies for a successful implementation of Universal Basic Education; so far- Concept of UBE, Objective of UBE, Challenges of UBE Program, Strategies for UBE Successful Implementation, Recommendation and conclusion are therefore proffered.

Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for development. According to the FRN (2004), education in Nigeria is an instrument ‘par-excellence’ for effecting national development. This accounts for why many nations spend reasonable proportion of their annual budget on education (Obanya 2000). The Federal government of Nigeria launched Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme in September 1999 to raise the minimum level of education accessible to every Nigeria child at no cost. The scheme is a follow-up to an earlier programme (The Universal primary Education) launched in 1976 to make primary education free and compulsory for all children of primary school age. Nevertheless,
primary education was made available to higher percentage of Nigeria children than hitherto though it was impossible to make it compulsory throughout the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. If well implemented, the scheme will afford higher percentage of Nigerians the opportunity to acquire education up to this level and be able to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic development of the nation.

Primary Education is the first level of public education provided for children for basic, social, emotional and physical development and adjustment. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), primary education is the education given in institutions for children aged 6-11 years plus. Primary education is a major component of the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria. The core objectives according to Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) being the universalization of access and quality in the delivery of basic education, others are to inculcate in children permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively (UBEC 2008).

This could not be possible without effective administration. According to Odigbo (2001), administration is the art of organizing and managing men, women and material to attain the goals of organization. Educational Administration therefore is the arrangement of the human and material resources available in education and using them systematically for the achievement of educational objectives. Obi (2013) opined that research findings have revealed that organization that failed to achieve their targets is as a result of deficiencies in both planning and administration. As a matter of fact, planning and administration are very vital to efficiency, effectiveness, and success of any human activity including education. Thus for a successful planning and administration of education, the knowledge of population data is very important. Teacher/students ratio has been the major obstacle to the implementation of this programme, therefore the administrator should make sure that the two are balanced. Educational Administrator has the task of assisting the teachers in planning the schemes of work, time table and lesson plan at the school level, assisting in curriculum planning and development, supervision of implementation and review of plans through field-testing and evaluation of the plans, supervising of instruction, that is, overseeing the activities of the staff, checking the
lesson plans and ensuring the improvement of instruction. To plan is one thing but another is the implementation of it.

Implementation simply means putting a plan, scheme, decision, policy or idea into effect. Implementation according to Adirika (2000) is the moving force of any plan without which the plan is only a good intention. Implementation of UBE therefore refers to the procedures for effectively carrying out the activities of the scheme with a view to achieving the specified educational objectives.

The federal government has committed reasonable financial input to the UBE programme particularly in the construction of classrooms, offices, stores and toilets in several primary schools across the Nigerian nation. Assistance and help have been received from the World Bank, the United State Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) among others for the development of infrastructure, resources and materials for the UBE programme. Training and retraining programme for teachers’ have been carried out by the National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in order to ensure the success of the programme in Nigeria. The auspices of the British Council have also enhanced teacher-retraining programmes, Innovative techniques of teaching have been emphasized in the various training and retraining of staff in the core subjects. School based assessment and improvisation of instructional materials have also been focused (NTI, 2006). Though the Federal Government has also committed funds to the provisions of vehicles, and boats for the monitoring of the UBE programme, the formidable landmark input was the presidential assent to the UBE Bill on 28th May, 2004. Yet, the full implementation of the scheme has been affected by some problems which include:

- lack of adequate Funding and Financial Management of UBE,
- some teachers lacked the necessary background to teach reading, writing, and mathematics effectively.
- Teacher Demand and Supply; lack of adequate number of well-trained and qualified teachers, who should be well motivated for improved teaching activities.
• inability to estimate the cost of providing accurate number of school buildings, learning facilities and financial implications of the entire programme.

Concept of Universal Basic Education

Education is an indispensable tool for personal and societal development. It was perhaps in recognition of this fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in September, 1976. The UBE scheme was launched in Sokoto by the Obasanjo-led administration on September 30, 1999, bearing in mind the factors that led to the failure of earlier attempts at universalizing education in Nigeria. According to Yoloye (2004), Universal Basic Education implies the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of Nigerians society from generation to generation.

Five years after the launching the UBE programme, it appeared that the operators of the programme were having problems of implementation. This led to the reviewing of the programme. The review resulted in the establishment of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in 2004 by an Act of the National Assembly known as the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 (FRN, 2004). In its reform agenda, the government states that the UBE programme was introduced to remove distortion and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) as well as to provide greater access to, and ensure quality of basic education throughout Nigeria.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) has three main components; Universal, Basic, and Education.

**Universal:** Universal connotes a programme that is meant for all facets of the society (the rich, the poor, the physically fit and physically challenged, the brilliant, the dull, the regular students and dropout) including every other individual that is ready to acquire knowledge.

**Basic:** The term ‘Basic’ is related to the base take off point, fundamental, essential, spring board, bottom line, the required and of course expected. Basic education by Nwankwo (1991) is that which emphasizes the acquisition of literacy and numeracy
and provide opportunities to development problems – solving skills and to acquire values, attributes and broad cognitive competencies

**Education:** The basic fundamental of all education system is the primary Education. In further recognition of education as a potent tool for an all-round development of the human potential and a unifying force for national development, FRN (2004) has clearly stated in the revised national policy on education that since the rest of the educational system is built upon it, the primary level is the ‘key to success or failure of the whole system.

**Objective of Universal Basic Education**
The UBE programme as spelt out in the implementation guidelines, aims at achieving the following specific objectives;

- Developing in the entire citizenry, a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- Provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- Reducing drastically the incident of drop out from the formal school system.
- Catering for young persons, their schooling as well as other out of school children or adolescent through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, and manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for the life skills.

**The Challenges of the UBE Program**
Planning is one of the first things done before a Programme is embarked upon. Planning is futuristic and so gives insight into the anticipated. The need for adequate planning cannot be overlooked in any programme because Obi (2003) believes that planning engenders control. The over-enrolment of pupils led to over - crowded classrooms which could result into ineffective classroom management. Instructional facilities such as textbooks were also in acute shortage (Shika. 1999). Thus, the
implementation of UPE scheme which was conceived as a pre-requisite for equalization of opportunities for education across the country, as well as a vehicle for removing the educational imbalances among the states of the country, was marred by poor planning.

The challenges facing the UBE scheme have been quite numerous. They range from funding concerns (payment of staff and faculty salaries, maintenance of infrastructures in schools), training and professional motivations of educators, and gender issues. The lack of adequate funding of UBE clearly reveals the absence of commitment to education by the government and is reminiscent of the reason for failures of past endeavors. Commitment is typically judged by the level of resource allocation. When the government is faced with contending national issues, the education sector is least likely to receive extra attention. Again, the provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities such as buildings, equipments and instructional materials remain formidable challenges for the UBE scheme.

Some teachers not only lacked the necessary background to teach reading, writing, and mathematics effectively, they were generally weak in English language grammar, lesson planning, lacked the wherewithal for producing teaching aids, and of generating creative ideas. Teaching was largely teacher centered: chalk and talk (NTI, 2006). Low motivation and lack of textbooks, support materials, and interactive activities are also barriers to the effective implementation of the UBE at the primary school level. Absenteeism was also a common factor negating UBE implementation.

More so, in this era of globalization when technological advances are shifting educational paradigms, it is still doubtful how opportunities could be harnessed with optimal success when a large portion of teachers are ignorant of the basic concerns and expectations. Some critical questions deserved answers in the conception and implementation of UBE program. Has the government trained the required number and quality of teachers needed for successful implementation of the program? Are there motivations for teachers to perform their duties? Are the classrooms and seats ready, or
are the students going to sit on a bare floor? Are the books and other teaching materials readily available?

Problems associated with inability to estimate or project accurately the population that will be in school during a given period, lack of the knowledge of the number of teachers that will be required, and inability to estimate the cost of providing accurate number of school buildings, learning facilities and financial implications of the entire programme are planning related.

**Strategies for Successful Implementation of the UBE**

The administrator should adopt the following strategies to successfully effectuate the UBE scheme intentions in practice.

**Planning:** The Planning process set in motion to assess the situations on ground in terms of the necessary resources is a good start. Adequate time should be given to identify other relevant variables and adequately provide for them. For examples, classrooms need to be renovated and many more need to be built. More teachers need to be trained for employment. All these activities require funds and time to plan for the take-off of the scheme. In the opinion of Obioma (1999),” Adequate planning is a must to prevent a repeat of the collapse of the UBE scheme”.

**Funding and Financial Management:**

Funding is the most important factor in the implementation of the UBE scheme. It is on it that other factors relating to the procurement of resources are hinged. There should be checks and balances to ensure that any amount allocated for a specific project is judiciously used. Funds allocated to States and Local Government Areas should have in-built mechanism for accountability, to prevent diversion of such funds to other unrelated areas by any of government officials.

**Teacher Demand and Supply:** Successful implementation of UBE anchors on the availability of trained teachers. This is so because professionally trained teachers are incontrovertibly perceived as the life wire of any educational system, as no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers (FRN. 1989). Employment of adequate
number of well-trained and qualified teachers, who should be well motivated for improved teaching activities, becomes important. For the teachers to function effectively, there should be adequate infrastructure and instructional materials such as relevant textbooks. AbdulKareem (2000) opined that efforts must be made for writing, production, distribution, utilization and maintenance of relevant textbooks, for teachers' and pupils' use.

**Continuous Evaluation through Monitoring:** There is the need for a continuous quality control mechanism to ascertain the adequacy or otherwise of the different aspects of the implementation process of the UBE scheme (Zelvys, 2004). These aspects include improved curricula relevant to the needs of the pupils and the society; and enrolment drives to encourage parents to send their children to schools, especially in the so-called educationally disadvantaged areas. This could be done through adequate enlightenment campaigns and by making the schools attractive enough. The attractiveness of the schools has to do with provision of functional\ aesthetic infrastructure and relevant curricula.

Teachers should work together, cooperate and closely relate in their professional needs. Nobody should continue to pretend that he can do it all alone, the time to break away from the false standing that the teacher is the sole custodian of knowledge has come. More classrooms should be expanded, training and re-training of teachers, adequate learning environment/ infrastructure and caring for teachers" welfare should also be provided.

**Conclusion**

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a laudable programme aimed at providing universal, free and compulsory education for the Nigerian child. The target of UBE scheme is both personal and societal development. However, considering the lessons of the past and the statistics of resources on ground, certain strategies need to be employed to provide easier and ready guidelines for a more successful and less wasteful UBE implementation. These strategies relate to adequate planning and provision for financial, human and physical resources, Funding and Financial Management, Teacher Demand
and Supply, Continuous Evaluation through Monitoring. If well implemented, the scheme will afford higher percentage of Nigerians the opportunity to acquire education up to this level and be able to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic development of the nation.

**Recommendations:**

- The government should provide more classrooms to effectively accommodate pupils for the UBE programme.
- Teacher/students ratio has been very poor therefore, it is recommended that more qualified teachers should be recruited and special salary structure should be designed for them, by doing that at least many people will develop interest for the teaching profession and shortage of teachers will be overcome.
- Although teaching facilities were supplied in abundance to many schools but what was observed is that, most of these facilities are kept in the stores without proper utilization, therefore, more supervision and evaluation of the activities of schools should be carried out on regular basis to avoid that.
- Teachers should plan their lesson and provide enough teaching materials for pupils to understand the lesson very well.

**References**


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