

Implementation Strategies on Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper discusses Assessment of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Policy Implementation Strategies. A nation's policy on education is governments way of realizing national goals which can be achieved through education as a tools. The political and administrative in constancies were so much that they affected both policies and programmes in Universal Basic Education. The concept of educational policy and policy implementation was examined. The universal education goals were stated as contained in the policy statement on the nation policy on education and frequent changes happening in the national of policy on education. The proposed strategies for the realisation of the goals of universal Basic Education were state which include UBE shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory where discuss. The critique of the UBE policy implementation in Nigeria which discovered that, lack of continuity in government in adequate funding in budgetary allocation and inadequate of provision of educational services are constraints of UBE programme in Nigeria. The paper concluded that if strategies were employed, the quality of universal basic education will highly be improved. The paper recommended that effort should be made by the three tiers of government to make education completely free at the primary and junior secondary school levels in order to encourage universal access to the education provided.

Keywords: Policy, Policy Implementation, Strategies, Universal Basic Education.

Introduction

The Nigerian education system has experienced a lot of innovation in her educational policies. Education policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of a people. Education is a potent tool for all round development of an individual or a nation. Bassey, Ekpo and Edet (2008) asserted that education is a great investment in an economy it increases the quality of the individuals in a nation and this helps to speed up the race for economic development. For this reason, the federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument per excellence for affecting national development. In view of this, the government has reviewed the national policy severally in order to make it more functional and to meet up with the changes in the world technology. One of Nigeria's national goals is to build a great and dynamic economy. The federal government came up

with these policies that aim at transforming the economics standing of citizens and would want to use education to actualize these objectives.

For these goals to be actualized, there is need for proper planning staffing. funding and management of policies. Management in this context is concerned with planning, funding, monitoring and Evaluation. According to Okoroma (2006) efforts have been made to develop education in Nigeria since 1960. Various polices have been formulated but not well implemented or given enough time to evaluate the result. Unfortunately, not much has been achieved. Odukoya (2015) observed that from 1999 to date the country had different regimes, and ministers of Education. The states were not exonerated from these changes. Each of the presidents, ministers, Governors and commissioners had different conceptions and policies on education for implementation during their tenure in office. With such instability in the system of governance most of the policies were abandoned half way probably because funds were not provided. The political and administrative inconsistencies were so much that they affected both policies and programmes in the educational sector. Odukoya (2015) noted the incessant changes within the government. These resulted to lack of continuity of programmes, fallen standards, and inconsistency. Nigeria has not earned a pass mark in this regard. In the light of these objectives there is need to re-assess the steps taken by government to realize these noble objectives in education. For this reason. educational planners need to examine these fundamental problems in education.

Concept Educational Policy

Educational policy refers to the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of an education system (Bolaji, Grav & Campbell-Evans, 2015). The conceptual clarification of the role of educational policy attests to Nigeria's commitment to policy initiatives for the collective will of citizens, and for the growth and national development of the country. The saying that no nation can rise above its educational development explains educational philosophy of the country which centres on building a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens FGN (2013). Therefore, educational policy refers to a set of prescribe rules and a planned course of actions so be taken in order to achieve already stated objectives of an educational programme.

Concept Policy Implementation

Policy implementation refers to the systematic process of carefully translating stated policy guidelines and strategies into action. It is the stage that is concern with the actual experimentation, practice, and demonstration of a planned course of action. According to Viennet and Pont (2017), refers to the administration of the laws, guidelines and procedures in which various actors, organization, procedures, and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect in an effort to attain policy or program goals Therefore, education policy implementation is the purposeful and multidirectional change process

aiming to put a specific policy into practice and which may affect an education system on several levels (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Education policy implementation is a complex, evolving process that involves many stakeholders and can result in failure if not well targeted. In act, a range of reasons can prevent implementation from being effective. such as a lack of focus on the implementation processes when defining policies at the system level: a lack of recognition that the core of change processes requires engaging people: and the fact that implementation processes need to be revised to adapt to new complex governance systems. It is therefore crucial to understand it, clarify its determinants and explore ways in which it can be more transparent and effective (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria (UBE)

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a free, compulsory and 9-year education programme comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. It also includes adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out-of-school youths (FRN, 2013). It was designed to be provided by the government and shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises of 1-year pre-primary, 6 years primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education (FRN, 2013).

Aims and Objectives of Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria

The followings are the objectives of objectives of UBE according to FRN (2013):

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. The provision of compulsory, free and Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
3. Reducing drastically, the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
4. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling; and
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Changes in Educational Policies on Universal Basic Education

Nigeria has experienced several reviews, reforms, innovations educational policies and programmes. Also, a lot of inconsistencies exist which has resulted to poor standard in the educational system. Changes in policies and government tend to have negative impact on the policies and programmes of education especially Universal Basic Education. Giving

credence to the above, Odukoya (2015) observed that between 2000-2022, the nation passed through different regimes. Notably from Babangida to Shonikan four in 1993 to Abacha 1993-1998, Abubakar 1998-1999 Obasanjo 1999-2007. Yar Aduwa & Goodluck Jonathan 2007-2015, Muhammad Buhari 2015- 2023.

Within this period Nigeria had several of ministers, Governors, commissioner with different views on how to administer the affairs of the education sector. This gave rise to inconsistencies even till date Nigeria is moving forward as regards to educational policy and programmes. There is lack of continuity, this has hindered national development. There are also several modifications. For instance, the UPE. UBE, 6-5-4 system, 6-3-3-4 system 9-3-4 system. No one can predict what policy or change that will come up next. All these policies are accompanied by framework, new proposals and pronouncements.

Implementation Strategies of Universal Basic Education Policy in Nigeria

According to FRN (2013), the goals of Universal Basic Education shall be the same as those of primary and junior secondary education. Since UBE combines pre-primary, primary and junior secondary education, the following implementation strategies of LUBE were outlined by Odukoya (2015).

1. UBE shall be tuition free. Universal and compulsory
2. The following educational services shall be provided: (i) school library. (ii) basis health scheme; (iii) counselling; (iv) educational resource centre, (v) specialist teachers of particular subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, etc.
3. Teaching shall be by practical, exploratory and experimental methods.
4. The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject.
5. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.
6. For effective teaching and learning, the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:35;
7. Advancement from one class to another shall be based on continuous assessment;
8. Special efforts shall be made by all appropriate agencies to encourage parents to send their children to school.
9. Government shall therefore provide basic infrastructure and training for the realization of UBE goals at the school level.
10. The Primary School Leaving Certificate shall be based only on continuous assessment and shall be issued locally by the head teacher of the school;
11. Everything possible shall be done to discourage the incidence of dropping out at the primary level of education. However, if this occurs, provision shall be made in the context of adult and non-formal education to enable such early leavers to continue with their education.

12. Government welcomes the contributions of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary schools alongside those provided by the state and local government as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government.
13. In recognition of the prominent role of Information Communication Technology in advancing knowledge and skills necessary for effective functioning in the modern world, there is urgent need to integrate Information and Communication technology education in Nigeria.
14. Students who complete junior secondary school shall be streamed into: (i) the senior secondary school; (ii) the technical colleges; (iii) an out-of-school vocational training centres; or (iv) an apprenticeship scheme. The streaming shall be based on the result of tests to determine academic ability, aptitude and vocational interest.

Universal Basic Education Policy Implementation in Nigeria

The following implementation strategies of UBE were directed towards the policy implementation strategies in Nigeria.

Provision of Tuition Free, Universal and Compulsory Education:

It was the aim of UBE to provide free, compulsory and universal education to every Nigerian Child of school going age. The effective implementation of this strategy will have provided opportunity and access for every Nigerian child to be educated. However, this strategy has not been adequately implemented as many parents are being observed paying fees to most junior secondary school students, including registration for the Basic Certificate Examination. The situation is not also different, as many levies are being paid in public primary schools and junior secondary schools by parents and guardians in Nigeria.

Many Nigerian children of school going age are not even in schools which indicate that proper measures are not in use to ensure the universality of the Basic Education According to Etuk, Ering and Ajake (2012), a good number of Nigerian children are trapped in child labour. As are result of poverty, a number of parents as Oloko (2012) revealed, send their children to either serves as domestic help i.e. house help/domestics or hawkers, just to supplement family income.

Provision of Educational Services:

The following educational services were identified to be provided as part of the UBE implementation strategy: counselling services, educational resource centre, school library, basic health scheme. specialist teachers in some key subjects. So far, efforts have been made to provide schools with libraries, but without adequate supply of books and other materials. Many public primary and junior secondary schools do not have any professional guidance counsellor. The quality of basic health services rendered in public primary schools have not been observed so be different from the regular national immunization programme

which is not part of UBE plans. Many teachers are employed without any educational background and even the mode of selection is based on politics or connection. In addition to the insufficiencies which have been influential in limiting the potential success of universal basic education Okiy (2014) revealed that there has also been a poor state of school libraries, among other educational facilities which should have given children the opportunity to be educated.

Practical Exploratory and Experimental Methods of Teaching

It was specified as part of UBE implementation plans that efforts were going to be made in order to ensure that the quality of teaching provided is practical, exploratory and experimental. The proper implementation of this strategy will have ensured that learning is made more concrete and real as opposed to the abstract concepts currently thought. It can be said that, this is the most unfortunate policy strategy of the UBE programme because it is in reality, very rare to see any public primary or secondary school teacher delivering lesson with such teaching method. Instead, what is common is the traditional method of "talk-chalk" that is widely in used by most primary and junior secondary school teachers. The facilities necessary for experimental and exploratory teaching and learning are missing due to the poor provisions. In addition, Muftahu and Hazri (2015) revealed that many of the teachers were also incompetent and therefore not able to effectively carry out the functions which were anticipated from them. It can therefore, be seen that many teachers even with the few provisions made, are in themselves incompetent in manipulating such devices as computers, tablets electronic gadgets. How can one teach what he doesn't know?

Use of Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction:

It is true that the prescription for the use of mother tongue in the teaching and learning process will enable UBE achieve the set goals. This has not been followed up effectively by those implementing the curriculum. Also, the trend of fluent speaking of English Language, as well as the dustbin position given to the mother tongue by most people in Nigeria, has made many parents and teachers to avoid the use of mother tongue in homes and schools respectively. According to Ajayi (2018), another problem associated with teaching in the mother tongue is that there are not sufficient books for children at this level to interact with. The majority of those available are foreign-based and expensive, making them unaffordable and not readily available to these children. The few home-based books that are available are of low quality, making them unappealing and unattractive to read Arop Festus, Owan Valentine Joseph O. and Ekpang, Martin Akan (2020).

Teacher-Pupil Ratio:

It was stipulated in the implementation guidelines that the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:35. Unfortunately, this strategy has not been implemented by the Government

Discouraging Incidence of School Drop-Out:

It was specified as part of the implementation strategies of the BE programme that, the Government will do everything possible to discourage the incidence of school drop-out rates from the school system. The policy did not prescribe what will be done to discourage the rate of school drop-out from the primary schools. Again, due to the failure of the Government to provide free education to all Nigerian Children of school going age, many pupils whose parents could not meet up with such financial demands from the school system are left with no other option than to disconnect from schools. Arop Festus Owan et al (2020).

Provision of Infrastructure:

The need to provide infrastructures by the Government was clearly stated in the UBE implementation blueprint. The purpose was to ensure that there are adequate classrooms libraries, buildings, laboratories, and other materials for effective teaching and learning. The effective implementation of this strategy is highly questionable especially given the fact that many primary schools are utilizing buildings that are dilapidated and worm out.

Funding:

It was stipulated clearly that the Government at all levels will support the UBE scheme with the necessary funds for effective implementation of the programme. Unfortunately, the annual budgetary allocations channeled towards education generally, has never met the 26% benchmark set by UNESCO. In fact, the Education Rights Campaign (ERC) has described the 7.04 per cent allocation to education in the proposed 2018 budget as unacceptable, as it condemned it in strong terms, calling for upward review of budgetary allocation to education to meet the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation, UNESCO's recommendation of 265% (Olaniyi, 2017).

Collaboration with Voluntary Agencies, Communities and Private Individuals:

The need for the inclusion of communities and private individuals in the implementation of UBE scheme has to some extent, been beneficial to the programme. This is because many private individuals make donations to the programme, many communities also support the UBE programme by rendering certain services like building some structures, keeping the school environment clean.

Integration of ICT to the UBE Scheme:

The National policy of education prescribed there shall be integration of Information and Communication Technologies into the UBE programme. This will have help in raising learners that will be able to function in a dynamic economy, and adapt to the technologically changes of the 21st century.

According to Adeosun (2020), one of the things which have contributed to the lack of efficiency of the education system in the country is the insufficient integration of information and communication technology. Factors such as poor internet connectivity, poor knowledge and technical skills in information and communication technology infrastructures, lack of time, lack of financial requirements, and reluctance from both the teachers and the learners have all been highly influential in the failure to integrate such technology in education.

Achievement of Universal Basic Education Policy Objectives

In assessing the realization of UBE goals and objectives, it will be pertinent to ask five importance questions:

1. Are the entire citizens of the country conscious towards education with a strong commitment towards its vigorous promotion?
2. Is the education provided at either pre-primary, primary or junior secondary school levels compulsory? Is it totally free? Is every Nigerian child of school going age in school?
3. Are there still school drop-outs from the formal school system in Nigeria?
4. Are young people who for one reason or another interrupted their schooling. given any complimentary education or opportunity for better livelihood?
5. Are there appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills in young learners within the formal school system? In other words, can every child in primary or junior secondary school read. write, speak simple correct English. or solve basic mathematics problems involving arithmetic?
6. Do all these young learners possess one or more vocational skills? Are there still ethical, moral security, and civic issues within the primary and secondary school systems?

If for any reason, there is a "yes" to any one, two or more questions posed above, it implies that the goals of UBE in Nigeria have not been realized. The degree of realization of such objectives depends on the number of "Yes" or No provided as answers to the questions posed above. The higher the number of "Yes". the higher the degree of UBE goals realization, and vice versa. Arop Festus Owan, et al. (2020).

Conclusion

UBE policy just like every other policy of Education contained in the National Policy on Education were well drafted and clearly stated. If such policies are followed appropriately as stated, the Nigerian Education Sphere will witness a dramatic rise in terms of quality, and in the attainment of the Nation's objectives. The education sector has witnessed a lot of problems especially, in the implementation phase of all educational policies. So far, efforts are still being made by the Government and other stakeholders to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. In doing this there is need for such efforts to be made with virtues such

as equity, trust, reliability and rationality. With this in place, the Nigerian Educational system will move the next level.

Recommendations for Effective Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria

Based on the issues raised with respect to the implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria, as well as the realization of set objectives, the following recommendations were offer:

- i. Measures should be employed by the three tiers of Government to make education completely free at the primary and junior secondary school levels in order to encourage universal access to the education.
- ii. Regulatory bodies such as Universal Basic Education Commission at the federal or State Universal Education Board at the state level, should ensure that proper measures are taken to punish any parent or guardian withholding their children from going to school.
- iii. Educational services such as library, transformation, counselling, and health services should be adequately provided to all UBE schools in order to ensure that learners educational.
- iv. There should be a total shift in paradigm from the traditional methods of teaching to a more practical, experimental, and exploratory teaching that will encourage hands-on activities. This can be achieved through close monitoring and supervision of teachers while in the classroom, and the provision of facilities.
- v. Use of mother tongue should be encouraged especially at the early stages of children educational development in order to enable them understand English Language effectively.
- vi. Given the high rate of population in Nigerian Schools, and the need to make learning more practical, the teacher-pupil ratio should be set at 1:5 (One teacher to five pupils) at the pre-primary section; 1:20 (One teacher to twenty pupils) at the primary section: and 1:35 (one teacher to thirty-five students) at the junior secondary school section.
- vii. There should be adequate provision and supply of infrastructure to schools; while won out facilities/structures should be fixed or replaced in order to avoid inadequacies in terms of infrastructural provisions.
- viii. Funds should be adequately allocated to education from the nation's budget, at least to the tune of the 26% benchmark set by UNESCO. Funds from private individuals and other donors should be used judiciously for intended purposes, and for public benefit.
- ix. Private individuals and other donors should continue supporting education with funds and other materials considered appropriate to ensure the smooth running of the school.

- x. ICT should be integrated into the formal school system by making provisions for the creation and supply of ICT equipment and experts to schools. Teachers should also be trained on the use of such equipment. There should also be constant supply of electric power to sustain such equipment provided.

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