

Provision and Management of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 21st Century in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is the purpose of this article to assess the indicators for the provision and administration of free compulsory universal basic education (UBE) in the twenty-first century in Nigeria. The introduction of free and obligatory basic education in the conventional schooling system of Nigeria has resulted in a rise in the number of students enrolled in the system throughout the country. However, questions about the program's overall quality and usefulness have long been a source of contention between scholars and administrators. This article examines the challenges surrounding free and compulsory education, as well as the setbacks that the system has encountered. The article finds that expanding access to elementary education within the free and compulsory education system has become vital, but that the quality of such offerings must not be disregarded when making such decisions. These recommendations, among others, are based on the previously discussed issues: the Federal Government should adopt a systematic approach to improving the quality of basic education in Nigeria, provide adequate funds to run basic education more effectively; and the Federal Government should adopt a systematic approach to improving the quality of basic education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Management, Compulsory, Universal Basic Education, and Century.

Introduction

Education is a tool for national growth and social transformation, and it is essential for the advancement of a progressive and cohesive nation. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian, regardless of gender, socioeconomic rank, religion, ethnic background, or any other unique individual difficulty, according to the Nigerian educational philosophy (NPE, 2013). The government has adopted policies and strategies to reform the entire system in order to provide not only access to education, but also to improve the quality of education and broaden participation, such as the provision of vocational training schools for adults, nomadic education, and the provision of Basic Education for children to encourage the Nigerian traditional schooling system. In the context of this article, traditional schooling refers to Nigeria's traditional primary and secondary education. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education, basic education refers to the education provided to children aged 0 to 15. It includes Early Childhood Education (0–4) as well as 10 years of formal education.

The Federal Government established a Universal Basic Education (UBE) for policy coordination and monitoring purposes, with the goals of developing the entire citizenry, reducing the incidence of dropouts from formal school systems, ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security, and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning, and so on. According to the National Policy, the major elements and structure of the Nigeria UBE are as follows: Basic Education provided by the government shall be free, compulsory, universal, and qualitative, consisting of one year of kindergarten, six years of primary school, and three years of junior secondary school. Basic Education

replaced Nigeria's conventional schooling system, including changes to school organization and curriculum to match the demands of labor and self-sufficiency. The fact that it is 'Free and Compulsory' transmits Nigeria's 'Free Traditional Schooling,' which is a crucial aspect in this discussion.

Nigeria's strategy for achieving Education for All (EFA), a global movement coordinated by UNESCO that aims to address the learning requirements of all children, youth, and adults by 2015. The UBE program resulted in the provision of free traditional education for children in all Nigerian states. This was important since some parents could not afford to pay their children's school fees. It functioned as a motivator for underprivileged students and dropouts to return to school. Adults were sent to vocational training centers, while children were given free traditional education.

In Nigeria, the UBE policy has resulted in the establishment of State Universal Basic Education Offices to administer the program. These organizations have been tasked with managing material and human resources in order to ensure the smooth operation of Nigeria's Basic Education Institutions. The traditional Nigerian schooling system's now free and compulsory basic education has resulted in a greater number of kids participating in the system across the country. However, experts and administrators have long debated the program's quality and usefulness. If land and infrastructural facilities, learning equipment, and human resources do not rise at the same rate as enrolment rates, it is possible that increased enrolment rates may put additional strain on current facilities. As a result, Labo-Popoola, Bello, and Atanda (2009), learning and instructional contexts and/or situations will deteriorate, compromising the much-anticipated improved academic performance and skill development (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009).

In Nigeria, there is a need to guarantee that UBE implementation is of high quality. Obanya (2001) stressed the importance of quality and relevance, claiming that mass schooling, as planned by the UBE program, will not serve the nation until the issues of quality, efficiency, and relevance are addressed. Despite the fact that there has been a significant increase in the net enrolment of primary school children across all states, the key question is whether these increases have translated into provision education throughout the country and whether the UBE program's objectives have been reached. There are concerns about the curriculum coverage of UBE programs, administration, the sufficiency of structural and instructional facilities, and the outcomes of the Basic Education program. Do free traditional schooling help children develop social skills and enhance their grades? What impact does free traditional schooling and increasing enrolment have on dropout rates among students? As a result, it is necessary that UBE administration pay attention not just to enrolment growth but also to concerns of relevance, quality, efficiency, and equity, so that the educational system translates the 'increase' into the critical mass of educated people required for national progress.

The problems of concern in this article are thus free traditional schooling and its consequences on the quality of Basic Education provided in Nigeria, as well as understanding the impact of free traditional education implementation on the quality of Nigeria's Basic Education Program. Are there adequate structural facilities, learning/instructional materials in the free traditional schooling system for quality basic education provision in Nigeria? Are there adequate structural facilities, learning/instructional materials in the free traditional schooling system for quality basic education provision in Nigeria? Is the number of students in the class a factor in efficient classroom management? Is the quantity of teachers available sufficient to cover the curriculum content of free traditional schooling in order to provide quality basic education? What have been the trends in primary school academic achievement in Nigeria over the last five years with the provision of free traditional schooling?

Theoretical Framework

The assumption that managers have the necessary skill sets and know how to effectively implement policy in any organizational environment is referred to as management. Diefenbach (2013) explore the role of managers in the implementation of education policies in their theory of organizational management, which is in line with the above statement. Researchers developed a better understanding of the importance of managers in a bureaucratic system as a result of Diefenbach's work, as well as a better understanding of how bureaucrats or professional managers use concepts and procedures in implementing policy choices. These researchers' work provides a fresh viewpoint on how to comprehend the complexities of management. The direction of policy implementation, according to Diefenbach, is determined by the alignment or interpersonal interaction of persons who are accountable for implementing policy choices. Both thinkers emphasized the need of looking beyond the managers' skill sets and focusing on how their interpersonal relationships inside the bureaucratic system influenced policy implementation. This was in line with one of the research topics, which attempted to examine how bureaucrats' activities influenced the execution of the UBE program in Nigeria's rural areas.

Learner characteristics must be considered from the start of the educational program plan, according to the conceptual framework. What is the age of the children and what degree of schooling is being considered? This has an impact on a variety of other decisions made throughout the educational program's preparation. It is necessary to create a conducive learning environment, which can be achieved by providing sufficient structural facilities, instructional equipment, and good classroom management. The curriculum's material must be organized to match cultural values and societal demands. The same curriculum requires adequate teachers to convey the content in the most appropriate manner, and frequent evaluation, of course, is an important element of the educational process for getting feedback and making good improvements. Where the system is effective, the result will be functioning and experienced UBE graduates, but where there is little trust in the system, there will inevitably be dropouts. Understanding these factors would serve as the foundation for evaluating the quality of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education. To ensure that the program's goals are realized and that it is sustainable, quality measures are established. The output and outcomes of the free traditional schooling program are used to assess goal achievement.

The Trend of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

The history of basic education in Nigeria began in 1995, when the government of Western Nigeria launched the universal primary education scheme. In 1957, the government of Eastern Nigeria established its own universal primary education program. In Northern Nigeria, the government made education free in order to encourage children to attend school. This demonstrates that, prior to independence, universal basic education was administered on a regional basis and supervised by multiple administrations. In October 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria, led by General Muritala Mohammed and Gen Olusegun Obasanjo, introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE), directing that all regional sites join with the new initiative. This extraordinary breakthrough boosts educational growth at all levels, particularly at the primary school level. One of the notable achievements of the federal government during this regime was the decree making primary education free and compulsory for all citizens; this sparked an explosion in the primary education system as a result of non-fee access to education, which resulted in a massive increase in the number of schools. Nigeria took part in the World Conference on Education in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, which was titled "Education for All" (EFA). One of the other issues raised at the conference was the high rate of illiteracy in almost all of the countries represented. It was also observed that many students who had the opportunity to begin schooling are dropping out due to inability to pay the

necessary fees. As a result, one of the outcomes of the gathering was the adoption of Education For All (EFA) in order to reduce the rates of drop-out and illiteracy to the bare minimum. Nigeria's federal government started Universal Basic Education (UBE) on September 30, 1999, to replace the previous Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Professor Pai Obanyan served as the first National Coordinator, and it was launched in Sokoto State. Basic education, which includes ECCE, primary, and junior secondary school, is covered under the Universal Basic Education Act (2004). States and local governments are responsible for subsidizing basic education. However, using 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund, the federal government has opted to intervene in the provision of basic education. The Act also establishes the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), which will coordinate the program's implementation at the state and municipal levels through each state's State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). On October 7th, 2004, the Universal Basic Education Commission was formally constituted. The following are the goals and objectives of Universal Basic Education: 1. Developing a strong awareness of education and a strong commitment to its aggressive promotion in the entire populace. 2. Improving the relevance, quality, and efficiency of the formal education system to substantially reduce dropout rates. 3. Providing for young people who have had to interrupt their education for one reason or another, as well as other out-of-school children and adolescents, through appropriate supplementary methods to the provision and promotion of basic education. 4. Ensuring sufficient levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communication, and life skills, as well as ethical, moral, and civic values, are acquired in order to establish a strong basis for lifetime learning. As a follow-up to the conference in Jomtein, an international conference on education was held in Dakar in 1990. At this meeting, new targets were established to be achieved by the year 2015. The following were the objectives:

1. Improving and expanding early childhood care and education, particularly for the most vulnerable and underprivileged children;
2. Meeting the learning needs of all young people and adults through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs by 2015, with a special focus on girls and children in difficult circumstances;
3. Meeting the learning needs of all young people and adults through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs;
4. By 2015, achieve a 50% increase in adult literacy, particularly among women, as well as fair access to basic and continuing education for all individuals;
5. By 2005, gender gaps in primary and secondary education will be eliminated, and gender equality in education will be achieved by 2015, with a focus on ensuring that girls have equal access to and achievement in high-quality basic education.
6. Improving all elements of educational quality and assuring excellence for all, in order to attain recognized and reasonable learning outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, as well as vital life skills.

Setbacks in the Free Education System

Human beings are insatiably interested and desirous of finding solutions to the difficulties that arise from time to time in order to improve their living conditions. It is possible to be confronted with a specific problem without being aware of the root of the problem. In this situation, one is really interested in determining exactly what the problem is by carefully examining the situation. To improve a system, it is necessary to identify, characterize, and correctly analyze the problems in order to determine the most appropriate remedy. Nigeria is confronted with the issue of reversing the precarious state of the educational system in the country.

Unsystematic Approach in the Planning of the Free Education

Perhaps one of the biggest causes of educational inequalities has been educators' use of ineffective and unscientific techniques to solve educational challenges (Leskes, and Wright 2005). To meet the rising enrolment expectations, a thorough examination of the different inputs previously considered in making free and compulsory education a success should have been in place. As a result, the quest for universal education arose as one of the possible tools for arriving at reliable solutions to educational problems. Meanwhile, in the teaching and learning environment, a variety of variables are taken into account, ranging from the individual uniqueness of recipients to the difficulty level of instructional materials. These issues cause inconsistencies in teaching and education quality.

For administrative and fiscal resources, the UBE's effectiveness is still reliant on public services. It is necessary to rethink the primary functions of education and training, as well as to create new frameworks for working with government agencies in general. Individuals in charge of the Basic Education system must work strategically enough to believe in the system so that they are confident in sending their children to the UBE system. The escalating economic shortage that is affecting all three tiers of government in Nigeria is becoming a growing concern for Nigeria's basic education program. Some state governments have begun to reduce funding for the program, claiming that free and compulsory basic education is not producing the expected outcomes. As a result, the basic education program has reached a tipping point, where it must reinvent itself in the face of both internal and external threats.

Inadequate Funding and Misappropriation of Funds for UBE

As stated in a paper presented jointly at the 29th Annual Congress of Educational Conference, which took place from November 3rd to 7th, 2014, the current level of education funding in Nigeria, which is less than 26 percent of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO, is observed to have some obvious implications on the educational quality as a product, according to Joshua and Essen. It has been noticed that inadequate budget levels do not assure the provision of effective and high-quality facilities to maintain a high grade of education. The provision of free traditional education must be accompanied by adequate and appropriate funding (Anam, Arugwu, and Utulu, 2014), and if funds are available, they must be appropriately managed in order to strengthen the system.

For the expansion and success of UBE, there is a critical need for large expenditures to be allocated to practical instruction. These finances could come from a variety of internal sources, including personal savings, financial support from wealthy individuals, the Parent Teachers Association, traditional rulers, and co-operative organizations.. In order to support the education system in the face of decreasing appropriations from the national government, funds could be raised from external sources like as banks and non-governmental groups.

Dearth of Infrastructural Facilities for Implementing Universal Basic Education Programmes in Nigeria

The availability of infrastructure facilities like as classrooms and labs as well as workshops and student dorms, administrative buildings, and even recreation centers are essential for effective teaching in the primary and secondary education systems. The age of these artifacts presents a more methodical problem. The majority of schools have buildings that are as old as the numerous institutions that house them were created. Some of these structures are in a state of disrepair and need to be repaired or replaced. Educators in the contemporary day, according to Oluremi and Oyewole (2013), give education in a completely different way than they did in the past, using modern

technologies, approaches, and teaching methods that do not conform to the basic convention of obsolete old designs.

Inadequate Human Resource for Implementing Universal Basic Education Programmes in Nigeria

The rising enrolment status of UBE exerts a direct strain on the university's ability to provide additional human resources. What should be anticipated of a class room with up to 100 or more pupils in terms of classroom management and the availability of learning materials in such a circumstance is unclear. Parental preference and sending their children to private institutions (including the very teachers of UBE systems) has increased as a result of the system's level of ineffectiveness.

Conclusion

Basic education of high quality is a positive storm that will enhance Nigeria. Nigeria would be endowed with quality workforce as it moves away from previous blunders through excellent education, which will be beneficial to the country's progress. Quality education can only be ensured through proper management of the UBE program. It is the responsibility of both the states and the federal government to reach out to and collaborate with Nigerian teachers' unions and other stakeholders in order to strengthen education by fully implementing the UBE program's mission statement, addressing the problems of managing the UBE, and implementing good UBE management strategies for quality education in Kaduna state.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of establishing and maintaining quality in primary education. In light of these realities, Nigeria's education policy mandates that Basic Education be all-inclusive and of high quality. Primary education has long been recognized as the most vital and well-received around the world. It serves as a launching pad for jobs in a wide range of sectors. It is the foundation of both educational and professional development. It is the foundation of the entire educational quest, according to Oni (2008), which is meant to offer literacy and enlightenment to citizens. As a result, expanding elementary school access under the free and compulsory education system is required, but the quality of such offerings must not be disregarded.

Recommendation

The following suggestions will be required to achieve high-quality education:

- i. The Federal Government should take a systematic approach to improving the quality of basic education in Nigeria;
- ii. The Government should also provide adequate funds to run basic education more effectively;
- iii. All issues relating to the implementation of the UBE program should be addressed;
- iv. Regional management of UBE implementation in the country's six geopolitical zones, as opposed to the current centralized system of administration.
- v. To provide effective monitoring and supervision of basic education in every community, community involvement through SBMC (School-Based Management Council) should be promoted.

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