


Universal Basic Education Implementation Issues in Nigeria: Options of Innovation for Improvement in the Administration of Basic Education System

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Abstract

The paper explored Universal Basic Education, UBE implementation issues in its systemic administration and management of basic schools in Nigeria. On a more specific note, it discusses: the roles of Universal Basic Education at federal and State government levels; beneficiaries of UBE; existing implementation issues of UBE; and other Basic Issues termed unique UBE implementation Programme. All these put together may work against innovative ideas that existed with the UBE programme as stipulated in the Basic Education Act of 2004. The paper concluded and recommended the following among others, the actual statistics of out-of-school children should be obtained and balanced provision of education resources to rehabilitate them should be done by the commission, and UBE teacher's capacity building boost should be revisited to train many of them to acquire knowledge regarding UBE operations in addition to their existing academic qualifications.

Keywords: Administration, implementation issues, innovation, Nigerian Educational System, universal basic education

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Introduction

Education is life and at the same time, serves as the rudimentary weapon to set people free from poverty, parochial thinking, and agony due to ignorance. Education is the process of transmitting social values to citizens to enhance their knowledge, skills, productive capacity, income, and contributions to national development through the teaching and learning process for the attainment of goals and objectives of education (Fabunmi, 2019). In understanding the role which education service delivery promotes in national development, the government of Nigeria has offered an education policy blueprint for all levels of educational institutions. This is done in anticipation of achieving a great and dynamic nation by revamping the socio-economic and political needs of the citizenry.

Universal Basic Education allows the following categories of learners to benefit from services provided by basic educational institutions in hierarchical order: - Childhood Care Development or Preschool/Nursery/Kindergarten, Primary Education, Junior Secondary Education and non-formal Education such as Fishermen and Nomadic education sub-programmes. UBE is a nine-year educational intervention programme by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It was designed to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty to stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration (Omotayo, 2011). The programme is expected to serve the lifelong learning tendencies of all children, and even some adult learners. It is concerned with not only young children but also adolescents and adults who do not have ample opportunity for formal education (Egbebi & Harbau, 2019). It aimed at widening access to basic education and improving the quality of its provision through equal access, equity and fair play for every learner.

It has been confirmed that millions of children are out of school systems due to numerous factors. This commences from a child's upbringing in classrooms to acquire relevant knowledge in manipulative, literacy, music, Agriculture, and even sciences skills. All these skills put together may be seen as indispensable tools to fight poverty and make learners become total people in life (Egbebi, 2019). He furthered that, it may equally advance the enhancement of teacher professional development of dynamic teaching workforce. Thus, in the design and delivery of the UBE programme, great attention is expected to be placed on bringing about lasting solutions to issues of quality educational service delivery through effective and efficient instructional management strategies during the implementation of the UBE curriculum. Teacher preparation is expected to include minimum standards in Colleges of Education; and Faculties of Education of Universities, who are in charge of training of teachers (Omotayo, 2011). This development may be accounted for through effective educator training arrangements by players of the programme. UBE implementation issues will be highlighted shortly. So far in the operations of UBE, there existed some fundamental issues over the years.

According to Fabunmi (2019), the educational process involves different categories of people that use all sorts of resources which may be readily or not readily available for the use of learners, teachers, educational resources personnel, curriculum, finance and facilities/materials

As a result of this growth, countries of the world met at different periods and locations to discuss and agree on how freedom of free access, equity and quality education may be given to all children of school-going age. America is a country that has cherished children so much by the provisions of vital programmes. For instance, No Child Is Left Behind will give all to a

child to grow and develop at his or her own pace. This is to make them useful to themselves and the American community at large. To achieve this development within the larger society, the country's education curriculum was attended to with utmost priority (Etuk, Ering & Ajake, 2012).

The Education for All Track Initiative to give attention to the need for basic education all over the world is a global movement. This was launched in 2002 by donor governments under the organizational leadership of the World Bank. It was a direct response to the pledges made at Dakar in 2000 and at Monterrey in 2002, which resolved, among other things, that the international community would provide the necessary resources to countries committed to the provision of Education for All, as well as Millennium Development Goal, MDG goals. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) item two adopted by world nations in 2000 proposed that, by 2015, children of educable age should have free, affordable and accessible education. Nevertheless, the original target of the goal was not attained at the end of year 2015 (Egbebi, 2019). At that time, the millennium development goal nomenclature was readdressed as a Sustainable Development goal. The programme is a response to the world conference of "Education For ALL (EFA)" held in Jomitten, Thailand from 5th to 9th March 1990, which was the major reason for the birth of universal basic education (Okugbe, 2009). Among such meetings include the Jomitien Declaration of 1948 tagged, Education for All, EFA.

The role of the Universal Basic Education Commission, UBEC/ SUBEB on Man and Non-Man Resources Provision

The expected role of UBEC at the Federal government level and SUBEB at the local and State Government level cannot be overestimated. Such a role may affect the implementation of UBE in various dimensions if stakeholders fail to follow the stipulations of the 'Act 2004' that established the programme. The educational administration at the three levels of education in Nigeria falls under the concurrent list that is the business of Federal, State, and Local government obligation. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2014), UBE's

Blueprint aims at equipping an individual with what ought to be

Innovative knowledge, skills and attitudes would enable someone to solve problems of lifelong learning through education and especially to live a meaningful and fulfilling life in the society.

At this juncture, it may be expedient to mention the beneficiaries of the UBE programme before discussing the implementation issues.

Beneficiaries of the UBE Innovation Programme

The centre for Public Impact (2017) reported the main beneficiaries of UBE programme to include:

☐ Children aged 3-5 years, for Early Children Care and Development Education (ECCDE);

☐ Children aged 6-11+ years for primary school education;

- Children aged 12-14+ years for junior secondary school education. All the children in the range of age bracket usually fall among the drop-out-of-school or out-of-school pupils found on the streets

in the States of Nigeria

Existing Basic Issues of UBE in Administration and Management of Basic Education

Administrators at the execution level and managers at the top echelon of UBE systems of education have a herculean task on their hands. They are expected to apply basic elements of planning, organizing, directing, controlling, coordinating, budgeting, and motivation towards achieving the objectives of the Commission effectively and efficiently. Nevertheless, up till now, there existed the following basic issues in the basic education systems in Nigeria. According to Adeyemi, Oribabor and Adeyemi (2012), the following implementation issues are been faced by the systems:

1. Increase enrolment of pupils in the face of scarcity of resources;
2. Data inaccuracy;
3. Societal attitude;
4. Financial problems with acute shortages of funds;
5. Lack of adequate and qualified employees;
6. Improper supervision and inspection of basic schools;
7. Incompetent planning arrangements by the implementer group;
8. Unlawful appropriation of accessible funding;

In another dimension, Agi and Eremie (2018) have reported that one of the fundamental issues of UBE has to do with physical resources which are not adequately provided for and its likely adverse influence on the systems including:

- Poor academic performance of students;
- Poor attitude and disciplinary problems among staff and students; ☐ Poor concentration resulting from poor quality of inadequate classroom learning environment;
- High rate of absenteeism among staff/students;
- Low morale of teachers/students;
- Poor job satisfaction of stakeholders;

Over-crowded classrooms and many more. As if all the mentioned implementation issues of UBE are not enough, Shah, Akinyemi, and Oke (2021) reported the following issues of the systems that hinder its implementation: poor funding limiting the availability of qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials and infrastructures; corruption related to embezzlement of funds meant for education, which has led to a shortfall of resources and poor education quality.

Other Basic Issues termed unique UBE Programme Implementation Issues

There exists other UBE implementation issues as stated in the foregoing.

The teacher Preparation Factor: Teachers of UBE are expected to cover the lower, middle, and upper basic classes comprising primary 1 to 3, primary 4 to 6 and Junior secondary school 1 to 3. These teachers ought to add knowledge to knowledge apart from their academic qualifications which they acquired from teacher training institutions such as Universities, Colleges of Education and other teacher training colleges.

As of now, the UBE arrangement has come with some unique features that ought to promote innovative measures for teachers' preparation. If this is not done well, it may have negative implications on teacher's effectiveness and performance. The extension of UBE to cover not only primary but junior secondary education, as well as Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE) classes, demanded all these categories of learners receive adequate knowledge and skills in their classes during the teaching-learning process. This development has created a new set of demands that requires further teaching dynamism on the side of the teacher to manage the class well. The application of relevant instructional management strategies are required to be applied. According to Egbebi (2016), instructional management strategies have to be varied: learner-learner centre; and teacher-pupil centre depending on the situation at a particular point in time during the teaching-learning process anticipated to be strictly adhered to. Hence, the UBE programme has recognised that the continual deepening of knowledge and skills of teachers is an integral part of the development of basic education. In the opinion of Omotayo (2011), one important means of achieving competitive advantage by the teacher is the creation of conditions for the rapid acquisition of new knowledge and skills in the teaching profession apart from academic qualifications.

Across the world, teachers have been at the heart of the education reform movement and teacher professional development has been a main attraction of all systematic reform initiatives to bring about another round of innovation in the education sector. Quality teachers may promote the quality nation's economy and development through quality education delivery in the sector (FRN, 2014). This constitutes a standing implementation issue for the UBE programme in Nigeria. UBEC (2024), as posited by the Executive Secretary of the Commission confirmed that 57 billion naira has been disbursed for teachers' training within the last 13 years from 2009-2022. This development came to the limelight after observation of the poor number of teacher capacity-building defects during the range of the identified years. He affirmed that the UBEC 2022 National Personnel Audit revealed that 67.5 per cent of teachers in public schools and 86.3 per cent in private schools have not been given the privilege of attending in-service training in the last five years (2018-2022).

This has implications for quality education impartation in the UBE programme. This means at present there abound grossly inadequate training arrangements for teachers to cover the training needs as required in the UBE Acts of 2004. This development may affect the quality of learning outcomes at the basic education level.

1. **The Counterpart Funding:** Basic education schools have not been assessing the provided funding for proper implementation of the programme on infrastructure, building of classrooms and maintenance etc from UBEC Counterpart funding bank accounts across the federation. It was reported in Punch newspaper on 9th March 2024 that the renowned lawyer – Mr Femi Falana sued the Governors of 36 States of Nigeria on how they manage UBEC Counterpart Funding that is meant to develop and grow the basic schools.
2. **Out-of-School Children:** The occurrence of poor learner-pupil ratio of out-of-school children across the six geo-political zones is nothing to write home about in Nigeria. According to the United Nations International Children’s Children Education Fund, UNICEF,(2013), there were well over 13 million children that were out of school. Another premise has to do with the submission of UNESCO (2022), which reported that there were approximately 20 million out-of-school Nigerians are not enrolled in schools on its approximately 200 million population (Guardian Newspaper, 19 February 2023). Either to, the commission has yet to find a lasting solution to this standing issue.

Conclusion

The paper traced all implementation issues in the operations of the Universal Basic Education Commission for the sole reason of finding lasting solutions via suggested recommendations in this write-up. What brought about the UBE programme in Nigeria was reported from inception through several international conferences that were held starting from the Jomtien Declaration of 1948 in Thailand among others. Thereafter, basic issues of UBEC were revisited such as lack of proper planning arrangement; inadequate; Low morale of teachers/students; Poor job satisfaction of stakeholders; infrastructural facilities; and overcrowded classrooms among others. On a more special level, there exist two main fundamental issues of UBE vis-à-vis the issue associated with teacher capacity building effort from the Commission; and that of prevalent out-of-school children which is on the increase.

Recommendations

The discourse suggested the following recommendations.

1. The actual statistics of out-of-school children should be obtained and balanced provision of education resources to rehabilitate them should be done by the commission;
2. UBE teacher capacity building boost should be made for them to add more knowledge regarding UBE operations to their existing academic qualifications;
3. Infrastructural facilities should be provided across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria;
4. Education summit should be organized to reinforce both the learners and teachers to build up their morale; and
5. All stakeholders in the planning and implementation of UBE should find remediating solutions to the issues militating against the realization of the objective of the Commission.

About the Author

Dr. John Oluyemi Egbebi obtained his Ph.D. in 2016 in Educational Management from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria. Egbebi is a teacher who has taught across all levels of Educational Institutions in Nigeria. As of now, he is lecturing at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. He is a prolific writer and has authored five books in his field of study. He has published articles in reputable national and international journals. 0000-0003-3379-5260

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