



## CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) CURRICULUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 was in fulfillment of the stipulation of the world conference on "Education for All". The basic education is aimed at equipping every Nigerian child with functional knowledge, skills and attitude to live a meaningful and fulfilling live and to contribute to the development of their society in social economic and cultural benefits and to discharge their civic obligations effectively. It was backed up with the UBE curriculum implementation guidelines using the necessary mechanisms. However, the implementation of the UBE curriculum was fraught with some problems ranging from poor funding, inadequate infrastructure facilities and instructional materials, poor quantity and quality of teachers especially in the specialized subject areas and poor monitoring, supervision and evaluation of the UBE curriculum implementation. In view of the above assertion the government should make frantic effort to provide the required materials to ensure effective implementation of the basic education programme to achieve sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, f Effective Implementation, UBE Curriculum, Sustainable Development

### Introduction

Universal Basic Education, according to the National Policy on Education (2013), is education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early-Child-Care Development Education, however, is segmented into ages 0-4 years situated in a day care of creches; fully in the hands of private sector and social development services whilst ages 5-6 (pre-primary) are within the formal education sector. The policy stated that education to be given by the government shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative with the following objectives; (FGN, 2013: 5-6).

- a. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- b. The provision of compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- c. Reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.
- d. 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.

- e. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral, social and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning.

It further states that, in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. All teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained. Teacher education programme shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. Teachers shall be exposed to innovations in the profession and there will be provision of improved condition of service and incentives to motivate teachers and to make the teaching profession more attractive. To ensure effective implementation of the universal basic education curriculum, the National Policy on Education (NPR, 2013) states that, the government shall provide the following



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educational services for the basic education level:

- a. School libraries
- b. School health services
- c. Guidance and counseling
- d. Laboratories and workshops
- e. Facilities and infrastructure
- f. Educational service centres.

To achieve the stated objectives of the UBE programme, the UBE Act (2004), defined Universal Basic Education as early childhood care education for nine years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education skills acquisition programmes. This means that the basic education is aimed at equipping every Nigerian child with functional knowledge, skills and attitude to live meaningful lives and to contribute to the development of their society, derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society and to discharge their civic obligations competently in terms of scope. This calls for the effective implementation of the basic education programme through the supply of the necessary facilities and infrastructure.

The UBE also encompasses the following essential segments of education programmes:

1. Programme initiatives for early childhood care and socialization.
2. Special programmes for nomadic population
3. Vocational skills and training for young people who have not benefitted from formal education.
4. A formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of junior secondary school which combines skill acquisition.
5. Special training and skills for handicapped children (NPE, 2013).

From the above, it is clear that the UBE programme laid a great emphasis on skill acquisition at the upper basic level for future empowerment. This has come in line with the National Policy on Education (2013), which emphasized on skill acquisition programmes. The government believes that it will help to empower the youth, reduce unemployment and arm them with the skills for sustainable growth and development of the economy on completion of the programmes. The

government, realizing that the UBE curriculum represents the total experiences of which learners must be exposed, introduced its own curriculum which was organized in line with the goals and objectives of the programme. The National Policy on Education (NPE 2013), stated that the curriculum should be structured to include English and Mathematics as well as pre-vocational subjects like business studies, woodworks, electronics, mechanics, home economics, basic technology, civic education, practical agriculture and geography. According to Ebeku, (2008), the issue of implementation has to do with the execution of the UBE policies and programmes that comes in a curricula form at the classroom level. This was followed with the implementation of blue print of the scheme which has also outlined the roles and responsibilities of the federal, state and local government as well as the role expectation of other agencies, teachers and individuals to ensure that the scheme succeeds. Awareness was also created for all through seminars and workshops at various levels to enlighten the general population on their roles for successful implementation of the scheme.

The introduction of the UBE programme in 1999 was in fulfilment of the stipulation of the world conference on "Education for All". The declaration resulted in the astronomical increase in primary and junior secondary school enrolment. The increased in the enrolment brought along some problems. According to Okoro and Noske (2003), certain requirements would be needed to put in place for effective implementation of the UBE curriculum programme which include; Adequate provision of fund for smooth implementation of the curriculum and also an improved/innovative curriculum that will accommodate the changes in policy of additional infrastructure in order to boost the existing ones; an increase in the number of teachers to meet effective implementation of the curriculum with the increased students population, instructional materials that will be used during the teaching and more specialized teachers to teach the subjects introduced in the basic education curriculum and an evaluation



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procedure that will assist in determining the successful implementation of the curriculum.

The additional requirement above brought about the following challenges to effectively implement the UBE programme for sustainable development. These include;

#### **Inadequate funding of education.**

Adequate funding is an important factor in the effective implementation of any educational programme. Without the necessary funds, the best of any curriculum cannot be executed well. Chukwuma – Nosike (2012), explained that poor funding was responsible for poorly equipped laboratories and absolute tools that are still seen in most schools. Ajayi and Adenji (2009) supported the arguments and stated that, the depressed quality of education in Nigeria has been explained partly to inadequate funding of the system. They went further to say that in spite of the recommendation by UNESO of 20% national expenditure must be devoted to education. A closer look at Nigeria's expenditure on education reveals that Nigerian government expends only between 4% and 16% annually on education. They concluded that such a minimal percentage cannot guarantee effective implementation of basic education curriculum for sustainable national development.

Mshelia (2016), observed and lamented that “funding and education in Nigeria is generally subjected to chronic underfunding and budgetary discriminations leading to ineffective curriculum implementation and steady deterioration in standard as dwindling resources too far”. He further stated that, indeed the grant that goes into education is too low, considering its place to national sustainable development. The observation above requires that government and other stakeholders in the UBE programme should rise up to their responsibility by providing more fund for effective implementation of the UBE curriculum in order to achieve its stated objectives.

Unifun (2000), also stressed that, designing a curriculum is one thing and its successful implementation is another. He lamented that “a situation where two or three are merged and

placed in one classroom because of lack of infrastructure facilities”. Its implication is that; it has resulted into ineffective curriculum implementation of the UBE programme.

#### **Improved/innovated UBE Curriculum**

With the launching of the UBE programme, the need to plan the implementation of the curriculum to meet with the objectives of the programme became necessary. Ezenwa (2008), emphasized that the success of the UBE curriculum programme will depend on the ability to properly plan and implement the curricular activities in the curriculum that will lead to achievement of the set objectives is of significance. The curricular activities are to be planned and developed in such a way that it will be responsive to the needs of the Nigerian nation as it reflects in the objectives of the programme. The success of the UBE programme will ultimately depend on the quality of the curriculum. In planning the curriculum activities for the UBE programme experts are suggesting that three participants are key factors to consider. They are the learners, teachers and the society. This means that the UBE curriculum must be prepared in the manner that it will be easy for the teacher to interpret to the learners as to the implementer as well as be easy for the learners to receive and learn from it so that the society can benefit from it at large. In the Nigerian context, it has been a different matter altogether. Mshelia (2016), stressed that a thorough and adequate planning of curriculum implementation is very paramount in any educational programme. The proper curriculum planning involves the learners, teachers, society and stakeholders in the education sector. This is to minimize unforeseen problems. He lamented that, in Nigeria, usually political decisions are taken before planners are requested to come and weight the advantages and disadvantages of their reform programme. According to Obinna (2007), “no government effort on education can be realized if it does not perceive the problems and opportunities before initiating decision-making process”. He asserted that in most cases, teachers are deliberately neglected when major decisions on education and matters



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concerning their welfare are taken. This ugly situation has tragic and negative consequences on curriculum implementation. Also Onyeachu (2008), asserted that, the teacher is in the best position and most qualified resource person to be consulted for a successful curriculum implementation of any education programme. Mkpka (2016), remarked that the teacher is the most important person in the programme of curriculum implementation and must be involved in all stages of curriculum process. Eduok (2011), also opined that teachers as curriculum implementers and their method of teaching can either make or mar the educational process, as such teachers should be involved at all stages of curriculum process since the responsibility of interpreting and putting the curriculum into use rest with the teacher. He lamented that unfortunately, teachers who are the key implementers of the curriculum and instruction are not involved in decision-making and This therefore makes curriculum planning very difficult. The above submission indicates that, effective implementation of the UBE curriculum is still facing problems and efforts should have made by government to involve teachers at all levels.

### **Inadequate infrastructure, materials and equipment**

One of the major problems affecting effective implementation of the UBE curriculum for sustainable national development is the dearth need of infrastructural materials and equipment in most of the UBE schools. Lack of pre-requisites teaching resources as textbooks, laboratory equipment and audio visual aids particularly in science and vocational/technical education is posing a serious constraint to effective UBE curriculum implementation. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005), maintained that school facilities are the material resources that facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools. They posited that, educational facilities are those things which enable a skillful teacher to achieve a level of instructional effectiveness that far exceeds what is possible when they are not provided. Olokor (2006), also noted that the use of instructional facilities enhances learning

experience and leads to interaction within the learning environment. The issue at stake is to what extent are these facilities being provided for effective implementation of the UBE curriculum? Ahmed (2003), observed that in most of the UBE schools, teaching and learning takes place without these pre-requisites teaching facilities which have hindered the fulfillment of the UBE set objectives. Appreciating the importance of facilities Ivowi (2004), noted that to ensure that if curricular must be effectively implemented, infrastructural facilities, equipment, tools and materials must be provided in adequate quantities. Abdulkareem (2000) observed that most of the UBE schools do not have sufficient supply of the basic instructional materials to enhance teaching and learning in classroom. As a result, it makes it difficult to implement the curriculum to achieve the set objectives of the programme. Adesina (2003), lamented that our schools can only be what we want them to be, if only proper steps are taken in the provision of all that will make teaching effective Learning cannot really take place where the required facilities are not provided”.

As for infrastructure, Onyemere Keya (2003), observed space constraint in most of the UBE schools as a factor that affects effective curriculum implementation of the programme. He asserted that, spaces needed are mostly in the areas of science, for laboratories, introductory technology workshops, typewriting, pool and speed laboratories. Classrooms and other equipment required by schools for the UBE programme have always been below the quality expected. Emmanuel (2010), opined that physical facilities as workshop, laboratories, science equipment and technical tools in most of the UBE schools are grossly inadequate. He further stated that this situation has made it difficult to carry out practical work in workshop oriented courses”. The government should rise up to its responsibilities by providing more infrastructure for the UBE schools if it is to achieved the objectives of the programme.





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### **Poor teacher quality and quantity**

The quality of curriculum implementation reflects the teachers' quality Okoro and Chukwuma-Nosike (2013), maintained that, scarcity of qualified teachers especially in the area of business studies has made the use of mix-grill kind of qualification which has led to steady decline of teachers' quality. Qualified teachers of such subject like English, Mathematics, Basic Technology, Business Studies have been in short supply. This has made those without the requisite training and qualification to handle these in our classrooms. Mbakwem (2005), posited that while it can be argued that teachers' qualification had been on the increase but the teachers' quality and commitment have consistently been on the decline. This is evident from the poor exhibition of acquired knowledge and skills by students in their poor performance in most public examination as well as the inability to follow easily in the world of business and work. Onyechu (2008), posited that, a teacher factor is one of the critical issues implementer in the curriculum. He asserted that, for any programme to be successfully implemented, it must be adequate in terms of quality and quantity. He further noted that, it is disheartening to note that in most of the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, very few of the teachers are qualified and competent to teach. It should be noted that the teacher is a major stake-holder in curriculum implementation and no matter how lofty the educational goals are, how relevant the curriculum is, the teacher is the determinant of the success in the school. Adequate number of quality teachers, are needed to handle effectively all subjects meant for the universal basic education programme in order to achieve national development. In Nigeria, Therefore, coupled with the poor quality of teachers and lack of commitment among teachers could be partly explained for inadequate motivation of the teachers. Mshelia and Adamu (2018), maintained that motivation is a crucial factor in any human disposition. When there is motivation, teachers become active, functional, committed and dedicated to their duties duty. They further stated that unfortunately in

Nigeria, the school atmosphere is always dull. The things that may encourage both teachers and students are lacking. Teachers are poorly paid and housed and do not enjoy allowances such as housing, car and furniture allowances like their counterparts in other sector of the public service. Hence, many teachers are discouraging and demoralized from their duties. Such condition of service makes it difficult to implement the UBE for national development.

### **Problem of Specialized Teachers**

Basically the universal basic education programme is aimed at providing a strategic direction to the Nigerian education system in order to build a nation that Nigeria would be proud of. This resulted to structure the curriculum to include English and Mathematics as well as pre-vocational subjects like business studies, wood work, metal work, electronics, mechanics, home economics, basic technology, civic education and practical agriculture among others. In short, the UBE curriculum was expected to pay attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the elements of the national Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) which can be summarized as value orientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and should be using education to empower the people. In most of the UBE schools, the teachers to teach the pre-vocational subjects such as business studies, wood work, metal works, electronics, mechanics, home economic, basic technology, practical agriculture among others are in short supply. It should be noted that these subject areas are the one that can lead to sustainable national development of any nation. Nigeria should have taken a bold step to train teachers in these pre-vocational subject areas to ensure effective curriculum implementation of the UBE programme.

### **Poor supervision and evaluation of the UBE programme**

The introduction of the universal basic education (UBE) in 1999 was in fulfilment of the stipulation of the world conference on



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“education for all”. To achieve the above laudable objectives of the UBE programme, some operational approaches were outlined to include enactment of necessary legislation, articulated enabling policies, and organization of the curriculum to match with the policies to monitor, supervise and evaluate its implementation. According to Ebeku (2008), The issues of curriculum implementation has to do with outlining the role and responsibilities of the Federal, state and local government as well as the role expectation of the agencies, teachers and individuals to ensure that the scheme succeeds. The evaluation of the programme may involve checking the extent to which the curriculum in different subject content, learning experience and activities are implemented and comprehensively covered, and also evaluating the number of the teachers available as well as adequacy of qualified teachers in specialized subject areas, assessment of the infrastructure facilities, instructional materials, laboratory space and equipment and the extent of students’ participation in practical activities are necessary. This activity is to be carried out by stakeholders in UBE programme. However, such activities are either haphazardly done or not at all.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, every educational programme needs to be effectively implemented using evaluation mechanism from time to time to determine its effectiveness and adequacy. This means that every programme implementation should be subjected to some form of evaluation at one stage or the other to either improve or take vital decision on the programme. To successfully implement a programme, there are some essential ingredients required to enable a programme succeed. These requirements include adequate funds, instructional materials, infrastructure, facilities, quality teachers and proper operational approaches mechanism. When such are lacking it becomes a constraint to the programme implementation.

### Recommendations

In the light of the issues discussed, the government should make more effort to ensure that the following recommendations are provided for effective implementation of the UBE programme in order to achieve sustainable national development.

1. At Present, there is a need of additional infrastructure, instructional materials and equipment. The government should take a bold step by providing the additional needed infrastructure, instructional materials, facilities and equipment to schools in order to facilitate effective implementation of the UBE programme.
2. The government should ensure proper monitoring and supervision of the implementation of the UBE programme to achieve the set objectives.
3. Currently, there is a short supply in the number of qualified teachers especially in the pre-vocational subject areas. The government should make more effort to employ more qualified teachers to meet the minimum benchmark to ensure effective implementation of the UBE programme.
4. The content of the curriculum should be well and properly implemented to enable the students acquire the projected knowledge, skills and attitude for future national development that will benefit the recipients and the society at large.
5. Education is a capital intensive and therefore, it should be collective responsibility for all. Parents Teachers Association (PTA), community, non-governmental agencies and philanthropists can assist by providing equipment, facilities, infrastructure, to enable students participate fully during practical activities in the practical oriented courses.

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