

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT STATES: SCHOOL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discussed the instrument establishing the Universal Basic Education (UBEC) Programme and the scope of its functions. The School library development programme of the UBE is also highlighted with notable interventions from World Bank and UBE. Information is also provided on the stage of development in some states of the federation. Copious recommendations were made to improve on the quantity of library services in the Nations's schools.

THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was introduced in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria to correct the distortions in the education system especially in the areas of access, equity, and quality. The programme is free and compulsory for the first nine years of schooling from primary through to junior secondary.

Scope

The UBE Programme covers:

- ❖ Programmes and Initiatives for early child education and development;
- ❖ Six-year Primary Education;
- ❖ Three-year Junior Secondary Education.

Objectives

Some of the major objectives of the UBE Programme are as follows:

- ❖ Ensuring unfettered access to nine years of compulsory formal basic education;

- ❖ The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- ❖ Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
- ❖ Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Operational Structure

The UBE Programme was passed into law through the UBE Act, 2004. However, between 1999 and when the Act was passed in 2004, the Programme was run by the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC).

The Programme is managed by three tiers of government, Federal, State and Local Government. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), at the Federal level, coordinates, while the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) in the 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) implement the Programme in conjunction with the 774 Local Government Education authorities [LGEAs].

Funding

The UBE Act 2004 stipulates that the implementation of UBE shall be financed from:

- i. Federal Government block grant of not less than 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund [CRF];
- ii. Funds or contributions from Federal Guaranteed Credits and
- iii. Local and International Donor Grants.

However, for any state to qualify for the Federal Government block grant, each state shall contribute not less than 50% of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project. The administration and disbursement of funds is through the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs).

Formula for Fund Sharing

The formula for fund-sharing to the three components of UBE is as follows:

- ❖ 5% to Pre-Primary

- ❖ 65% to Primary
- ❖ 30% to Junior Secondary.

Furthermore, the formula for fund-sharing in implementing activities is as follows:

- ❖ 50% for classroom construction;
- ❖ 15% for instructional materials (textbooks, library books charts etc);
- ❖ 10% for teacher capacity development.

It is evident from the fund allocation formula that libraries are an integral part of the UBE Programme in Nigeria.

UBE Libraries

The National Policy on Education [NPE] which is the national minimum guideline for implementing formal education at all levels in Nigeria, identifies libraries as support services “at the heart of the education enterprise”. The NPE goes further to state that “since libraries constitute one of the most important educational services, proprietors of schools shall also provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards”. The NPE goes on to further direct that the school proprietors shall also provide for training of librarians and library assistants for this service. States and local governments are expected to also establish public libraries and actively promote readership. In the same vein the UBE Implementation Guideline recognizes libraries as spatial enablers of learning.

It is apparent from the statements in these two policy documents above that the provision and management of libraries are fully engrained in the educational tenets of the country.

Scope of UBE Libraries.

UBE libraries consist of the following:

- ❖ UBE Commission headquarters library
- ❖ UBE Commission Zonal and State office libraries
- ❖ State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) libraries
- ❖ Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) libraries
- ❖ School libraries.

Similarities between the UBE Programme and Libraries.

The similarities between the UBE Programme and Libraries include :

- ❖ Universality or Openness-to-all, (EQUITY/ACCESS)
- ❖ Free to a large extent as no fees are charged or substantial payment required for basic services
- ❖ Agents of change.
- ❖ Empower beneficiaries. (QUALITY)

It is therefore apparent that the library especially the school library, should be a pivotal feature of furthering the aims and objectives of the UBE Programme in Nigeria. This paper will therefore focus on primary school libraries within the basic education system in Nigeria.

Purpose of School Libraries.

School libraries are very vital to learning achievement in the school system. This is so, because school libraries stimulate and promote learning – to- read skills in lower primary classes and reading- to- learn in upper primary and indeed throughout life. The school library is very vital to the education system in Nigeria because it can be used effectively to bridge the gap that exists between the average pupil and access to adequate learning resources (print and non- print) critical to building a virile reading culture for life-long learning. School library resources also assist pupils to develop research skills early in life which is fundamental to the advancement of national, scientific and technological development.

The purpose of the school library as a quality service in the teaching and learning process is further strengthened by global research surveys that have discovered that ample access to and effective utilization of books by pupils has a significant impact on learning achievement. According to Heymann et al (1978) “the availability of books appears to be the single most consistent positive school factor in predicting academic achievement . Other more recent studies agree with this assertion. Mary Ratzler’s studies in 15 states in the United States of America from 1992-2004 revealed that, school library programmes were the number one indicator of student success when performance was compared with results in library impoverished schools. The studies revealed 8 to 15 percent improvement in reading scores above other factors like teacher experience, and access to computers.

Functions of the School Library According to the Minimum Guideline for UBE Libraries.

The functions include:

- ❖ provision of a variety of reading and learning resources to support teaching and learning.
- ❖ enhancement of literacy, critical thinking skills and a reading culture in pupils and students.
- ❖ sustenance of teacher capacity development through its resources at no additional cost.
- ❖ provision of pupils cost-benefit /cost effective access to more books than they might be able to buy on their own.
- ❖ promotion of social and civic values in pupils through the observance of library rules and regulations. e.g. keeping library materials in good shape, returning materials when due, cooperative sharing of resources when completing group work, maintaining relative silence in designated areas etc.
- ❖ advancement of reforms in the school curriculum through prompt acquisition and dissemination of 'new' information resources.
- ❖ encouragement of community participation through parent-volunteerism and donations.

Interventions in School Library Development for the UBE Programme

i FGN/World Bank Intervention.

Library intervention in the UBE Programme commenced in earnest with the FGN/WORLD BANK PEP 2 in the year 2002. This support was directed at 1,100 focus schools who were provided with classroom collections while respective head-teachers and teacher-librarians in the benefiting schools were trained on the management of the collections. The intervention was timely, however the number of benefiting schools, [1,100] if compared to the total number of existing primary schools which is 54,343, pales into 'a drop in the ocean'. The variety and quantity of resources made available were also limited because they were classroom collections preserved in steel boxes.

Also, 20 SUBEBs that met the pre-qualification standards set by UBEC were supported with ₦2million naira each to develop their

libraries and/or services rendered. The UBEC headquarters library was also supported to acquire computers and internet services.

The Federal Ministry of Education library project complimented this intervention in 2003 by providing 330 non- focus schools with library books. It is to be noted that the school library interventions stated above provided classroom collections but not centrally located school libraries as advocated in the NPE.

ii UBEC/SUBEB Librarians' Forum

The slow pace in the development of libraries (in terms of quantity and financial allocation) in comparison to other UBE inputs like classroom construction and rehabilitation, teacher capacity development and procurement of textbooks, ignited the formation of the UBEC/SUBEB Librarians' Forum in 2004. This was an initiative of the UBEC Headquarters library and some SUBEB librarians. The main objective of the Forum is to advance the development and mainstreaming of library services (especially the school library) into the UBE Programme.

The Forum has had four annual meetings since inception for information sharing and capacity development. The Forum serves as an additional and veritable lobby group for the advancement of school library services and works amicably with the Nigeria Library Association (National body for Professional librarians) and the Nigerian School Library Association.

The UBEC/SUBEB Librarians Forum also developed the draft Minimum Guidelines for UBE Libraries. The Forum has also been instrumental to accelerated draw-down of the ETF library intervention fund to SUBEBs and also advanced the inclusion of SUBEB librarians in Instructional materials committees. The annual meetings of the Forum has improved the status of libraries within the SUBEBs especially in the states where the meetings have been held. This is so because the SUBEBs not only funded and supported the meetings but ensured that they served as role –models to other participating states in the development of efficient SUBEB libraries and provision of functional school libraries.

iii Community Self -Help Project Libraries

The Community Self -Help Project, is an intervention process within the UBE Programme. The Project supports communities with a grant of N1, 000,000:00 to execute an educational project that they consider a priority. The communities match this grant either in cash or kind to the tune of at least 10 percent of the grant sum. UBEC reports revealed that some communities have used this intervention process to provide additional 159 school libraries all over the country. This means that Nigerian communities appreciate the role of the school library in the teaching- learning process and can be relied upon to advance the cause.

iv Early Reading Initiative in Public Primary School (ERIPPS)/ Classroom Reading Collections.

The Early Reading Initiative in Public Primary Schools [ERIPPS] pilot project was initiated by the UBEC as a reading enrichment intervention input to the UBE Programme. It was conceived after the 2001 Learning Achievement Tests carried out by the UBE Office revealed that there was gross deficiency in the reading ability of most primary school pupils in Nigeria. This reading deficiency according to the report, is responsible for low learning achievement prevalent in most basic education schools in Nigeria. The report recommended the provision of more school libraries as one of the remedial steps to be taken .

A consultant was hired by UBEC to carry out a pilot project that should enhance a more rewarding reading culture within the system. The pilot project was concentrated in 9 primary Schools in Kuje Area Council an urban- rural setting in the Federal Capital Territory [FCT]. The project was jointly funded by UBEC and the FCT UBEB.

Selected teachers and head-teachers from the participating schools were trained on how to teach reading as well as produce reading-enhancing instructional materials to enrich the process. Books were provided for classroom reading corners in each of the 23 classrooms within the project and reading clubs were established in individual schools. Teachers in the pilot project have been re-tooled on how to manage the books in the classroom collection using basic library skills

like colour classification of the books and effective loan procedures. These teachers are expected to mentor others in surrounding schools for cascading effect. The UBEC expects that this initiative will be scaled up in the FCT and its success will stimulate other states to buy into it.

According to the consultant, parents in the FCT rush their children to schools with libraries so that their children will have access to additional learning resources they [parents] cannot afford to buy. This goes to show that parents know and appreciate the value of the place of the school library within the school system

Different Strokes for different States: School Library development and services.

It is heartwarming to note that major stakeholders are yearning for the provision of quality school libraries within the system. This is exemplified further by teachers' responses to priority needs during the 2003 UBE National Learning Assessment survey where teachers ranked 'utilising the library' and 'increasing pupil abilities to utilise the library' as "areas of high priority". This raises the much needed hope that libraries will remain visible facilities within the school system in Nigeria.

The survey also revealed that 47 (51.0%) of teachers sampled in the survey, need much help in procuring appropriate supplementary books for pupils. Among the teachers, 38 (55.0%) need much help in using the library while 30 (51.0%) need much help in increasing pupils abilities in using the library. NSLA should note this findings and create opportunities in meeting some if not all of these needs on improving the situation within the system.

The minimum guidelines for UBE Libraries was developed by UBEC. This is in conformity with one of its statutory functions as contained in UBE Act 2004, which is 'to prescribe the minimum standards for basic education throughout Nigeria in line with the National Policy on Education and the directive of the National Council on Education and ensure effective monitoring of the standards'. It is one of the main documents that guide the development and management of primary school libraries in Nigeria under the UBE Programme. However, due to individual state needs and

priorities in the delivery of basic education in Nigeria, the level of library development and management varies from state to state. Here are some facts and figures:

UBEC/ SUBEB Librarians' Report 2007.

Drawing from the report rendered by the states at the UBEC/SUBEB Librarians Forum in 2007, the functional libraries (libraries with a teacher-librarian, specified minimum space, collection not less than 1,500 relevant books and non- print) within the school system were as follows:

Abia 150, Akwa- Ibom 31, Bauchi 2 (but has library period on school time table observed by all schools with or without libraries), Kogi 50, Benue 50, Ekiti 108, Imo 77, Katsina 140, Ogun 154, Rivers 10, Sokoto 79, Taraba 65, Yobe 10, Enugu 241, Zamfara 44, FCT 50.

It was pointed out at the Forum by the Ogun State participant that parents scramble to send their children to schools with libraries in the state because it affords the pupils an additional opportunity to improve their learning achievement grades.

UBEC Monitoring Reports on School Libraries. 2005-2006: 2006/2007.

According to UBEC National Routine Monitoring Report on quality assurance, the following number of school libraries were **constructed** in the following states within the **2005-2006** school year. Akwa – Ibom 91, Imo 10 , Anambra 770, Gombe,15, Sokoto 2 , FCT 8. Delta 13, Ekiti 6. , Cross River 1 .

The following states **rehabilitated** these number of libraries within the same school year: Katsina 40, Sokoto 2, Anambra 478. Abia 43, Imo 20, Cross River 2. Sokoto 2.

In the **2006/2007** school year the following number of school libraries were constructed in the following states:

Kebbi 11, Ondo 240, Yobe 10. Some states such as Enugu organised activities like, a library week where readership promotional activities e.g. Spelling Bee and Read-Aloud Sessions were carried out.

It is pertinent to note that the number of school libraries recorded here as **constructed/rehabilitated**, are not included in the number earlier recorded as functional libraries because they are yet to be fully equipped.

Three States and the Federal Capital Territory have been selected for fuller discussion in this paper based on their performances.

i Adamawa State.

Adamawa state is in the north east region of the country. It has a total of 21 Local Government Education Areas [LGEAs] and 1,614 primary schools. 180 of these schools have central school libraries . These libraries have an average of 1, 500 books in stock as well as audio- visual materials . Most of the libraries are the size of one classroom which is approximately 14m x 8m =112 sq. m. (recommended minimum guideline.)

Since 2005 when states started accessing the UBE/Federal Government Intervention Fund,150 teacher-librarians have been trained to manage their school libraries effectively. 8 ‘mega-libraries’ have been constructed in 8 local governments with internet facilities to service all the schools in these local governments. Plans are on ground to strategically provide more of such ‘mega libraries’ until all the 21 local governments are covered.

ii Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is the capital of Nigeria. It has a total of 465 schools out of which 50 schools have centralized school libraries. These schools are well distributed in the 5 Area Council Authorities.

The FCT has adopted a policy of ensuring that every school has a library period on the time-table when pupils can use the school library to accomplish any tasks at hand or spend the time in acquiring information literacy skills (especially in schools without libraries). The main objective of this policy is to ensure that pupils develop a library culture for life- long learning. This policy also ensures that the school library remains imprinted in the curriculum and is sustained as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

The skills stimulated by either a school librarian, teacher-librarian or the English teacher during the library period include: story-telling sessions, read-aloud activities from books brought in by pupils or teachers for that purpose, knowing the parts of a book and how to use them to access information, the care and management of books, how to locate and use information sources to complete tasks, re-creating stories (in writing) from books previously read, etc. These activities are graded to meet the ages and class levels of pupils.

iii Lagos State.

Lagos was the former capital city of Nigeria. It has 966 schools and 20 LGEAs. Fifty (50) schools are equipped with libraries and 5 have internet facilities. Since 2005, 200 teacher librarians have been trained. Library period is also entrenched in the school time-table to stimulate library and information use skills. The State plans to establish 4 computerized school libraries each year starting from 2010.

iv Oyo State.

The state is in the south west region with 33 Local Government Education Authorities and 1,925 primary schools. In order to ensure equitable access to school library services, the State Universal Basic Education Board has developed 33 well stocked standard school library resource centres in each of the local government. These resource centres service all the schools within each local government where teachers go to loan books for their schools. Most schools are within reach of the local governments and therefore it is easy for schools to maintain contact with the resource centres.

In addition, 127 new school libraries have been constructed across the state since 2005 when the Intervention Fund for the UBE Programme became accessible to the states. The teacher-librarians managing the 33 resource centres have all been trained

CONCLUSION

However, there is still a lot to be done in order to achieve the desired number of functional school libraries as contained in the National Policy on Education (one functional library per school). The UBE Commission

has advocated as a stop-gap measure, a cluster system where a centrally located school is fully equipped to serve not more than 3 other schools (cluster).

Recommendations.

UBE libraries at LGEA, SUBEB and UBEC levels serve as community, state and national clearing houses of information on the UBE Programme in Nigeria in conformity with international objectives of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development of Goals (MDGs). School libraries in the UBE Programme are vital resources for ensuring high learning achievement in pupils because they deliver variety of learning resources that enhance reading skills and vocabulary development as well as research and critical thinking skills. They also help teachers to keep abreast of current trends in different areas of learning thereby enhancing their professional development and upgrading their teaching skills.

In view of the invaluable role of libraries to quality education outcomes, all hands must be on deck to ensure that UBE libraries at all levels of operation are functional and provide effective and efficient services as stated in the UBE minimum guidelines for libraries.

In order to fast-track meeting the expected outcome the following recommendations can be implemented;

- ❖ Librarians in the UBE Programme including their counterparts in other agencies, ministries and departments, must become active and critical librarians in the pursuit of credible library services not only in the UBE Programme but wherever they operate. This calls for a synergy in planned activities within these bodies to consolidate efforts in moving library development and services forward.
- ❖ Urgent need for a condition survey of school, LGEA, SUBEB libraries for a reliable base-line data to support improved services and development of much needed new libraries.
- ❖ Need for a specific allocation of funds for library books from the 15 percent UBE Funds designated for Instructional Materials. The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) should be in the fore-front of ensuring that this is achieved in view of the declaration in the Roadmap for the Nigerian Education

Sector that 'well equipped libraries' must be a feature of the turn around strategies and deliverables required for quality education in Nigeria.

- ❖ Provision of library space in school architectural designs at all levels of the basic education programme to strengthen the 'whole-school – approach' intervention strategy.
- ❖ Strengthening existing school libraries so that they can be used to service a cluster of schools as a stop-gap.
- ❖ Inclusion of library Period on school- time-table for stimulating literacy and critical thinking skills in pupils. (Lagos State government has adopted this policy as reported in daily newspapers during the 2009 international literacy day celebration).
- ❖ Re-establishing Reading Clubs in schools in conjunction with relevant agencies i.e. SUBEBs, LGEAs, state libraries, (NLA, NSLA, FME READ CAMPAIGN DESK etc).
- ❖ Training of SUBEB librarians and teacher- librarians annually using part of the 10 percent FGN/UBE Funds for teacher development. (NLA, NSLA, should make a strong case for this.)
- ❖ Setting-up UBEC zonal and state office libraries and providing the budget to run them. This will add value to school library services after-school- hours
- ❖ Carrying out surveys on UBEC staff / pupils/ teachers/ parents' reading and library habits to ensure that appropriate library services are delivered to clients.
- ❖ Direct involvement of UBEC with collaborating partner's e.g. ETF in library development projects to ensure effective implementation .
- ❖ Advocacy with communities and other stakeholders in setting up school libraries under the FME Support-a-School and UBE Self-Help Projects. NLA and NSLA can be involved in spreading the necessary information about the existence of these projects at available fora.
- ❖ Promoting a reading culture in the UBE Programme through quarterly activities like essay, art, poetry, spelling-bee, competitions and book

exhibitions sponsored by corporate bodies in collaboration with the UBEC/SUBEB Librarians Forum./NLA/NSLA.

- ❖ Strategic use of the school libraries, to promote peace education, gender-parity and mother - tongue language education especially in relevant parts of the country through library collections and the added advantage of the traditional role of the library as a good agent of change.
- ❖ Involving parents especially mothers in all library activities because reading and literacy activities begin and are consolidated at home.
- ❖ Implementation of the directive by the NCE that annually, 7th August should be celebrated in Nigeria as National Library Day.
- ❖ Elaborate celebration of the International School Library Day by all stake-holders.
- ❖ All stakeholders especially the UBEC/SUBEB Libraries forum and the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) should take school libraries into the mainstream of the curriculum so as to ensure permanent literacy not only in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic but also in information and Communication Technology.
- ❖ UBEC should ensure libraries remain on the list of facilities to be inspected in schools in its quarterly national routine quality assurance exercises to stimulate a direct commitment from states in the provision of adequate and functional school libraries.

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