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INTRODUCTION

Nigerians again met at Kangiwa Square, Sokoto, on 30th September, 1999. The occasion was the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme by the Head of State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Coincidentally, it was at the same Kangiwa Square that the same Obasanjo, then Army General and Head of State launched the Universal Primary Education (UBE) scheme in 1976. Sad to say, the scheme was not so much a success story for lack of continuity and policy sustenance.

However, well meaning Nigerians and Educationists hope that the UBE will not go the same way as its predecessor.

Much of the fund devoted to education at all levels are consumed by such heads as personnel emoluments and staff welfare, equipment, infrastructure, training and re-training. What needs to be addressed is the issue of how to ensure that money earmarked for education in general and UBE in particular does get to education and if it gets there, that it will be judiciously utilized. This work will attempt at exploring elements of the funding of the system and its attendant problems and prospects and thus chart a new course forward. Universal Basic Education (UBE) The UBE programme has been viewed as a strong desire of Government to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry. It is intended as a visible evidence of Nigerian's strong commitment to international and African covenants for the generalization of Basic Education to which Nigeria is signatory. These include:


ii) The New Delhi (1992) Declaration requiring the B-9 countries (i.e. the nine countries of the world with the largest concentration of illiterate adult), requiring them to reduce the incidence of illiteracy drastically within the shortest possible time span.

iii) The OAU Decade of Education in Africa's commitment to the generalization of basic education.

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The UBE programme is part of Nigeria’s attempt to rejoin the international community by giving effect to her commitment to world trends in the field of basic education. It is for this reason that basic education in Nigeria context takes into consideration the major recommendations of the above covenants.

It has been noted too, that there are substantial shortcomings in Nigeria’s institution are personnel capacities for the delivery of a sound basic education for all citizens. There and also wide-spread disparities both in quality and access across the nation. Available infrastructural facilities, teaching and learning materials as well as qualified teachers are grossly inadequate. For Nigeria to attain the desired 100% national literacy rate soon, it is imperative that provisions be made and actions taken to universalize basic education enthrone a conducive learning environment and improve quality and standards. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is designed to address these challenges.

The meaning / aims goals and objectives of the U.B.E. scheme

Basic Education is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire foundational literacy. In the Nigerian context, basic education includes, primary, junior, secondary and nomadic education as well as adult literacy (FGN 2000).

This definition encompasses a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension is the broad spectrum of formal and non-formal possibilities and approaches to education, while the horizontal dimension covers the linear vision of education from early childhood care and education to junior secondary schooling.

Basic education is aimed at equipping individuals with such knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them:

i) Live meaningful and fulfilling lives;

ii) Contribute to the development of the society;

iii) Derive maximum social, economic, and cultural benefit from the society, and

iv) Discharge their civic obligations competently

The goals of the UBE scheme are to universalize access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time. The specific objectives of the scheme are to:

i) Develop in the entire citizen a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
Provide free, compulsory universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school going age.

Reduce drastically, dropout rate from the relevance and efficiency;

Cater for dropout and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;

Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning.

The introduction of UBE scheme is in line with the requirements of section 13 of the constitution, which emphasizes some education objectives such as provision of free secondary education free university education and free adult literacy programme. Dzever (2000) presents UBE as encompassing:

i) Programmes/initiatives for early childhood care and socialization.

ii) Education programme for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills.

iii) Special programmes for nomadic populations.

iv) Out of school, non-formal skills and apprenticeship training.

v) The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of junior secondary school.

The UBE scheme is intended to be UNIVERSAL, FREE and compulsory.

Free in this context does not imply that government will provide everything relating to the programme. Rather it connotes that the child has no responsibility to pay for his education and compulsory implies that sanctions will be imposed on persons societies, or institutions that prevent children adolescent and youths from benefiting from UBE.

Implementation approaches and strategies

Government Blue Print on UBE, presents the following approaches and operational strategies to be adopted for the successful implementation of the UBE scheme:

i) enactment of necessary legislation;

ii) articulation of enabling policies;

iii) sensitization and mobilization of the target groups and all stakeholders:

funding
v) Optional allocation and efficient utilization of resources vi) Adequate teacher training, recruitment and motivation; 

vii) Effective co-ordination of activities; 

viii) Encouragement and stimulation of the active participation of the private sector, non-governmental and voluntary organizations, as well as local communities in the scheme. 

ix) Establishment of working partnerships and collaboration with international community and donor agencies; and x) Regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme. 

To ensure the achievement of the objectives of UBE and avoid the past mistakes recorded under the former UPE more approaches have been suggested which include; public enlightenment, social mobilization, data collection, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and teacher recruitment, education, training, retraining, and motivation. All these require proper funding. 

FUNDING OF UBE IN NIGERIA 

The initial planning for implementation of the scheme was done on the basis of available data, for the year 2000/2001 which shows that; the additional number of pupils to be accommodated for the UBE primary one class will be in the region of 1.12 million pupils. At the rate 40 pupils per class, this will require the provision of 280,000 additional classrooms. Assuming we have adequate teacher in the existing schools; these pupils will still require a minimum of 280,000 teachers that is, at the ratio of 1 teacher per 40 pupils. (FGN 2000) Details of funding requirements are being worked out on the basis of available figures and returns that are coming in from the State Governments. The issue being raised here is, where do we get the money and how do we use it? 

The Executive Chairman Benue State Primary Education Board at the launching of UBE Dialogue session, in Benue State on 11th May, 2000 at Makurdi pointed out that the UBE is currently being funded by: 

1. Federal Government - Provides money for capital projects especially construction of classroom; 

2. State Government - Provides money for renovation / rehabilitation of schools provision of instruction materials payments of SPEB salaries and overhead allowances 

3. Local Government - payment of SPEB Headquarters teachers salaries. He noted that the greatest contribution is therefore been made by local Governments. Even then, Medical Bills of teachers are completely not paid and the six months benevolence salary of deceased staff is sourced
from SPEB overhead in addition to these, retirement benefits of teachers is still a major problem as many retired teachers do not know where to go for their benefits. These and many other financial issues need to be addressed properly if the UBE is to succeed. This leads us into a consideration of the problems and prospects of the UBE scheme.

Problems envisaged in the implementation of the UBE

1. **Policy Framework** If the policy implementation of the UBE programme is not carefully worked out with clear policy statements and enabling law to back it up then it is bound to face a lot of implementation problems. For any meaningful headway to be made in the implementation of the UBE programme, an institutionalization of a national body, state and Local Government agency for the control and coordination of the various segments of the programme must be put in place and properly funded.

2. **Accuracy of data collection analysis:**
   By data it is meant the quantitative aspects of things, in numerical description. Data is always insufficient in the following areas school enrollments, number of teachers i.e their qualifications, populations of school age, transition rate population of those completing or repeating and infrastructure, etc. Due to corrupt practice inherent in our educational system, distortion of statistical data presented yearly by schools by way of censes conducted by the Department of planning, research and statistic cannot be ruled out. Lack of the proper facilities for data handling and processing may stand in the way of accurate data analysis and thereby spell doom for the scheme.

3. **Over enrolments**
   Population of those vying for places in existing schools. In Benue State for example, there is an estimated 2,362 public primary schools with a total enrolment of 898,608 pupils. Out of this number 531,977 are boys while 366,631 are girls. At the take-off of the UBE, about 300,000 additional pupils are expected to register in the state. (Dzever, 2000).

   The disparities may be true nationwide. There could possibly be more than existing schools can adequately care for. Thus calls for proper estimation in funding of the scheme.
4. Inadequacy of qualified teachers

There may be the problem of inadequacy of qualified teaching staff to cater for the expected teaching population of students. There may also be the problem of re-orientating existing staff for the UBE, motivating them and ensuring their retention for success of the scheme. In Benue State for example, there are 16,886 teaching staff in our public primary school; out of which 11,199 are males and 5,687 are girl females. Presently, the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:53, instead of the prescribed ideal ratio of 1:40. This reveals that an additional number of 10,072 teachers is required. Besides, a census of unemployed teachers with NCE and above conducted by SPEB revealed that about 3,000 of such teachers are available for employment. If all these are employed, the number might still be in adequate. (Dzever 2000).

5. Inadequate curriculum

Dzever (2000) defines curriculum as "a deliberate systematic attempt to inculcate approved behavioural pattern in terms of knowledge, skills, habits, sensitivities, attitudes and values and to inhibit disapproved ones". In essence, the curriculum represents a given society. At present there is no existing curriculum for UBE. Such a situation does not augur well for the successful implementation of the scheme.

6. Inadequate infrastructure

Infrastructure include buildings, furniture, play field, farms etc. One expects that infrastructure and other facilities should be of appropriate quantity, size and quality in order to meet the minimum standard for protecting meaningful teaching and learning. Dzever (2000) points out that, in Benue State, prior to the launching of the UBE programme, the State Primary Education Board had a total of 3,052 classrooms that were in good condition throughout the State. In preparation for the UBE programme over 600 additional classrooms have been renovated from gracious grants from the State Government. In addition 119 head teachers offices have been built or renovated while 83 stores and 3 toilets have been built in our schools. However, 23,306 classrooms are required at the take off the UBE programme. It is very clear that what is on the ground falls short of demand. He further estimated that, to provide decent classroom accommodation alone for our pupils would require about N15 billion.

7. Lack of Instructional Material

Supply of instructional materials may be lacking and thus hamper progress in implementation of the UBE Scheme. Such materials
include: Wall charts, Globes, Relevant textbooks, Library facilities, Film projectors, Laboratory equipment, Rain gauges, Erasers and cardboard sheets etc. It is estimated that for Benue state alone a total sum of N2.99 billion will be required to provide instructional materials in one academic session.

8. In-efficient monitoring/evaluation
In-efficient monitoring/evaluation contributed greatly to the failure of the defunct "UPE" scheme launched in 1976. Supervision is an essential element in any workplace, aimed at ensuring maintenance of efficiency and standards. Unless the proper machinery is put into motion and properly funded, improper monitoring and efficiency may form a clog in the wheel of the UBE scheme.

9. In-adequate Mobilization
If proper awareness is not created about the UBE Scheme, and it is not properly sold to the public with proper orientation, then, ignorance about the scheme may hamper implementation.

10. Inconsistency in Government Policy making and implementation
This has become a problem in Nigeria today. If there is a change in Government, successive governments are hardly interested in policies of their predecessors. This inconsistency and discontinuity may destabilize the UBE scheme unless all Nigerians are determined to make it succeed.

11. Improper conceptualization of UBE
Nwana (2000) opines that, the fact that the constitution hopes that at some point in time education at all levels will be free and compulsory, there seems to be no such thing as FREE EDUCATION Someone somewhere and sometime has to pay the cost of any worthwhile education. The taxpayer or the nation is that person who must pay the cost of education.

Regarding making education compulsory, are we protected by the tenets of free enterprise, and can parents/guardians do without the services of their wards go to school?

These concepts if not properly defined and articulated, stand a chance of confusing the politicians, policy implementors and the general public. This may give UBE a bad taste.
12. Corruption

Corruption in government and public life of Nigeria has largely been responsible for failure of past attempts at basic education in Nigeria.

Corruption is still capable of playing its tricks again with the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria, through mis-appropriation of funds, embezzlement and squander mania coupled with general lack of accountability.

Prospects in Funding / Implementation of the UBE in Nigeria

By and large, it is the hope of most Nigerians that, UBE given necessary conditions will succeed and improve the education/literacy landscape of Nigeria as a nation. The programme in spite of all odds is still fraught with many prospects:

1. The scheme has been launched at a time when the country has just risen from military dictatorship and is witnessing a boom in economic activities and ventures. This steady rise in economic well-being of the Nation and people of Nigeria places UBE on a very sound footing. With the rise in world oil prices, the Nigeria economy is expected to have budget surpluses which would be invested in the scheme.

2. Nigeria has had a rich past experience at Universal Education from which she can draw lessons to forestall the present scheme.

As noted by Nwana (2000), Nigeria has, on three occasions put in place a universal education programme as follows:

In 1955 and 1957 the Civilian Western Region and the Eastern Region pre-independence Government respectively launched their Universal Primary Education. The effort was short-lived. The Federal Government at that time (Pre-independence but self governing) had no constitutional responsibility for ownership of primary schools as embodied in the Mac Pherson constitution. The two soon found out that the financial burden for such a venture was too enormous. The Northern Region did not attempt such a programme.

In 1976 the Federal Military Government headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo declared the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE). This exercise however ran into early problems such as the non-availability of reliable educational data - whereas less than one million pupils were expected to register for the UBE, about three million actually turned up - making nonsense of the projections for teacher supply, school buildings.
equipment needs etc. The economy seemed buoyant initially (oil boom), but soon changed to be very adverse (oil-Doon) in the early 1980. Funding therefore became difficult.

In 1999 the Civilian Government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo launching the UBE in Sokoto as already stated earlier in this chapter.

This exercise covers more years than previous attempts. (From primary to junior secondary school) noting that all tiers of government and the community are to be involved in the financing and management. It is noted that, while the previous efforts did not attract foreign assistance, the effort will do so. It is also noted that the national economy is recovery fast since the country's return to democratic governance. These are prospects for the UBE scheme.

3. It is certain this time around that with the UBE unlike previous attempts planning is seriously preceding implementation and this is a good sign.

4. The level of educational awareness among Nigerians today is higher than in previous years. The UBE stands than a good chance of capitalizing on this and making serious inroads by way of public mobilization, teacher recruitment and training and sourcing for financial support for the scheme at all levels.

Suggestions

Obanya (2000) posits that, a gigantic programme like Nigeria's UBE, will certainly pose enormous challenges to operators. Among which will be those of numbers, the complexity of the planning process, funding and resource mobilization, teachers, the state of the schools, political and popular will, and possibly that well known variable called the "Nigerian factor".

Facing these challenges appropriate is in fact the major task before all agencies of government and of civil society which have to ensure the success of UBE mainly by:-

a) avoiding the mistake of the past and b) turning the "Nigerian factor" into a positive force. All stakeholders should jointly seek how this is to be done.

c) Government should properly found all stages and aspects of the scheme.

d) Government must be prepared to set up adequate machinery for monitoring of the implementation of the scheme.

e) All citizens must commit to prayer the success of the scheme.

Mkpa (2000) agrees with the opinion that the teacher is incontrovertibly the fulcrum on which the curriculum lever revolves He is the heart and soul of the educational enterprise, indeed, the live wire of the school system. Teachers
belong to the only profession that has the potential of determining the social economic, political and moral destiny of very Nigerian citizen. This underscores the necessity for teacher preparation under UBE to be perceived as a sacred duty that must never be toyed with, if teaching must fulfill its divine professional mandate of cultivating generations of highly responsible disciplined and useful Nigerians.

Conclusion
This chapter has attempted to X-ray the basic components of the Universal Basic Education, the problems and prospects associated with the funding and implementation of the scheme and as well made useful suggestions to successful take off and implementation of the the scheme.
No sacrifice must be considered too great in ensuring the sustainability and success of UBE. All the Nation's creative energies should therefore be mobilized for this purpose, as EDUCATION FOR ALL IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF US ALL.

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