
Basic Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract

Basic education programme was launched in Nigeria in 1999 and the aims includes; to provide quality education for children between 6-15 years. Since the launched of the Universal basic education programme in Nigeria, the programmed have been faced with different challenges and problems. This article want to examine the challenges facing the universal basic education in Nigeria. Inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, shortage of infrastructural facilities, high population of students, poor supervision, insecurity, corruption, poor learning outcome, poor capacity development of Basic school teachers and inadequate instructional Material were identified as the challenges facing the Universal Basic education programme in Nigeria. To solve these challenges, the paper recommended the following: adequate funding, employment of more professional teachers, adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision, and adequate security of schools and prevent corruption in the administration

Keywords:

Basic education,
Challenges, Funding,
Insecurity, Schools.

Introduction

The universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is a nine year basic educational programme, which was launched and executed by the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration. Former president Olusegun Obasanjo flagged off the UBE programme on the 30th of September 1999 in Sokoto, Sokoto State. The UBE programme is Nigeria is a strategy for the achievement of Education for all (EFA) and the education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Agbowuro, & Joseph 2014).

Agbowuro, & Joseph (2014), observes that the universal basic education scheme is broader than the universal primary education programme. It is a scheme which intends to provide functional, free and quality education irrespective of sex, race, religion and location, to all primary schools and junior secondary schools. The scheme also stresses out the education of girls, nomads, migrants, refugees and the disable (FME, 2000). The concept of basic education has been viewed as a necessity to individuals, society, country and the world at large. This is because without education, no nation develops economically, socially, politically and technologically. Education therefore is a key to development. Thus the importance of basic education to the well-being of mankind is obvious it is a development index. Madugu (2000) postulated that basic education is a prerequisite for the success of democracy and a fundamental ingredient for the development of human potential.

Research has that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was launched in 1999, with the goal of providing “free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years”. The programme, however, was not able to take off immediately after its launch as it did not have legal backing. Therefore, initial UBE-related activities were carried out only in areas of social mobilization, infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials, etc. The UBE programme has laudable and specific objectives. These according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) are to:

1. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
2. Provide free, compulsory Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
3. Reduce drastically, dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;
4. Cater for dropouts and out-of-school children/adolescents the provision and promotion of basic education;
5. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning;
6. Ensure unfettered access to nine years of formal basic education;
7. The provision of free, universal Basic Education (FUBE) for every Nigerian child of school going age;
8. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved, relevant, quality and efficient educational system.

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9. 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. The UBE programme only took off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004 (Agbowuro, & Joseph 2014).

The main beneficiaries of the programme are:

- (a) Children aged 3-5 years, for Early Children Care and Development Education (ECCDE);
- (b) Children aged 6-11+ years for primary school education;
- (c) Children aged 12-14+ years for junior secondary school education.

Its scope included the following expansion of activities in basic education:

- (a) "Programmes and initiatives for [ECCDE];
- (b) "Programmes and initiatives for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above);
- (c) "Out-of-school, non-formal programmes for the updating of knowledge and skills for persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for lifelong learning;
- (d) "Special programmes of encouragement to all marginalized groups: girls and women, nomadic populations, out-of-school youth and the almajiris (Qur'anic student);
- (e) "Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth, who have not had the benefit of formal education (Femi, 2012).

Agbowuro, & Joseph (2014), submitted that the implementation process of the programme has been since 1999 but progress was hampered by lack of an enabling law to execute certain aspects of the programme. What a big relief it was when the president signed the UBE Bill into law on the 26th of May 2004 following its passage by the National Assembly. The UBE Act 2004 makes provision for basic education comprising of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Primary and Junior Secondary Education. The financing of Basic Education is the responsibility of the states and the Local Government. However, the Federal Government has decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2% of its consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF). For states to fully benefit from this fund, criteria were established which states are to comply. The Act also provides the establishment of the Universal Basic education Commission (UBEC) to co-ordinate the

implementation of the programme at state and Local Government levels through the state Basic education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government education Authority (LGEA). The UBEC was formally established on the 7th of October 2004. Ogunode, & Abashi (2020), observed that there are many challenges facing the management and administration of primary schools at the school level. Based on this submission, this article intends to discuss challenges facing the Basic education programme in Nigeria.

Challenges facing Basic Education in Nigeria

Inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, shortage of infrastructural facilities, high population of students, poor supervision, insecurity, corruption, poor learning outcome, poor capacity development of Basic school teachers and inadequate instructional material will be used as the challenges facing Basic education programme in Nigeria.

Inadequate Funding

Ogunode (2020), observed that inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria. A major challenge facing the primary school education and implementation of the curriculum at this level is funding in the midst of rising demands and cost of education. Ebong (2006), indicated that financial resources are made of monetary inputs into a system such as the education system. They act as a lubricant for the system (primary education) and without these financial resources programmes cannot be properly planned and policies implemented. Hitherto, without availability of funds and proper management to carry out any work at the primary level any plans of transformation are bound to fail. Funding issues in primary education play a crucial role in determining the level of success, development and change. It also helps to direct attention towards the achievement of set goals at all levels of education. Adequate funding entails a timely supply of funds, qualified teachers, administrators and infrastructural facilities to ensure success in any organization. Ogunode, & Abashi (2020), did a study that investigated the challenges facing the administration of Universal Basic schools in Abaji area council of FCT, Nigeria. The result established that their challenges facing the administration of Universal Basic schools in Abaji area council of FCT. The study identified the challenges to include; inadequate fund, corruption (looting of school fund), inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, large class size, inadequate of instructional aids, unstable policies, ineffective supervision, challenges of achieving quality and poor motivation of teachers. The study also revealed that respondents agreed the challenges facing the management of primary schools is militating against the achievement of objectives and is responsible for the poor quality of education of primary schools. Philip, Okoroafor

& Iro, (2015), did a study is an investigation into the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in Nigeria: A case study of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The purpose of the study is to investigate the manner in which the FCT Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) is implementing the UBE policy. The investigation revealed that inadequate financial resources and lacked adequate human, institutional for the implementation of the policy; the UBE in the FCT enjoyed stable political environment; and The UBE in the FCT lacked adequate monitoring. Reasons for inadequate funding of Basic education in Nigeria include; corruption, lack of political will to fund the basic education, short fall in revenue, insecurity problem and competition from other sector.

Inadequate Professional teachers

Ogunode (2020), opines that shortage of professional teachers is also a problem facing the administration of basic education in Nigeria. Many primary school in Nigeria do not have adequate professional teachers. Teachers are fundamental to effective delivering of teaching programme in the educational institutions. The teachers' place in the educational institutions cannot be replaced. Teachers are the implementer of the curricular. The teacher plans the lesson, organizes the instructional resources and deliver the lesson. The teachers ensures the students learn the right knowledge and skills through the process of teaching and learning. Teachers are found in all the educational institutions. It is unfortunate that as important as the teachers to the development of education, in Nigeria, the professional teachers are not adequate in all the forms of educational institutions. At the early child education, basic education and junior secondary school education there are deficit of professional teacher. The 2018 National Personnel Audit (NPA), conducted by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), reported, there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary Schools across the nation. At the senior secondary schools, research has it that shortage of professional teachers is a problem facing the Nigerian secondary schools. NEEDS (2014) observes that One of these is the critical issue of teacher shortage at all levels of education. For instance, at the basic education level, the UBEC's 2012 National Personnel Audit Report revealed gross inadequacy in the quality and quantity of teaching personnel in the nation's primary and secondary schools. According to the report, there were 564,569 teachers in 59,007 primary schools in the country in 2012, of whom 297,960 were males and 266,609 were females. Also, there were a total of 133,338 teachers, comprising 68,085 males and 65,253 females, in 11,295 junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Considering that there were 20,291,709 and 4,313,164 enrollees in primary and junior secondary schools, respectively, during the personnel audit period, the teacher-to-pupil ratios of 1:60 and 1:37 were obtained for the nation's primary and secondary schools, respectively (UBEC, 2012). Agbowuro, & Joseph (2014) conducted a study that investigated the

problems and prospects in the learning of basic science in the upper basic under the umbrella of the Universal Basic Education programme. The purpose of the study was to assess the UBE programme in Nigeria. The results revealed that the teaching and learning of basic science in upper basic in Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State has some problems such as lack of enough qualified and competent teachers, high enrolment of students with lack of adequate facilities. Factors responsible for shortage of professional teachers in Basic schools are lack of manpower planning, inadequate funding, poor motivation of teachers, corruption and shortage of teacher education institutions.

Shortage of Infrastructural Facilities

Ogunode (2020), observes that another problem facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria is the challenge of inadequate infrastructural facilities. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. Asodike, Juliana & Ikpitibo, Clinton (undated) observes that physical facilities play important role in teaching and learning especially at the primary school age when the sense of imagination is still premature. The availability of adequate school building, classrooms, chairs and other facilities are necessary to the attainment of objectives of an educational system. However the increase in primary school enrolment does not have corresponding increase in infrastructural development in the primary schools. A common scene at the primary school environment is that of half completed or dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms lacking basic equipment and facilities with unsightly and unhygienic toilet. Corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, inadequate funding, poor maintenance culture and overpopulation.

High Population of Students

Ogunode (2020), submitted that administrators of basic schools across the country are worried by the high enrolment of pupils into the basic schools causing inadequate infrastructural facilities and teaching of large classes due to inadequate space. The National policy on education reported from their major finding that 100% of the teachers agreed that there is high enrolment with inadequate infrastructure. According to the school records the teacher student ratio is 1:100, this shows that there is high population with inadequate classrooms. The student-teacher ratio of 10:1 is out of context in the school setting, indicating that this is unachievable. The table below shows the pupils-teachers ratio of different countries compare to Nigeria situation. Molagun, (2007), did a study that examined the consequences of overcrowded classroom on the implementation of UBE objectives .The data collected were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. Results of the investigation showed that close to 60% of primary school teachers in Ilorin metropolis faces the problem of large class size

i.e over population in their classes. The investigation also revealed several problems being faced by teachers who teach over crowded classes. This ugly situation reflects the lukewarm attitude of the government towards the promotion of qualitative Education. Recommendation were made on the need for the government to provide more modern classrooms for schools and also repair the dilapidated ones in order to allow for the successful attainment of the UBE objectives at the primary school level. There are many factor that accounts for over-population in Basic schools in Nigeria and these factors include high birth rate, culture, poor planning and poor projection plans.

Poor Supervision

Ogunode (2020), submitted that the problem of poor school supervision by the respective school administrators have also contributed to the challenge facing the administration of basic schools. Many school administrators do not effectively supervised the basic schools under their watch. The Nigerian government recognized the need to monitor not only the financial management of the school, but also the teaching of students. Educationists at the Ministries of Education both at the federal and the state levels have set up quality control divisions in their respective ministries to ensure that quality education is maintained. It has been established that quality and standard could be maintained in the educational institutions through regular inspection and continuous supervision of instruction in the schools. Supervision and inspection have been identified as very germane to the day-to-day activities of educational institutions (National Open University of Nigeria, 2009). Onele& Aja (2016), did a study that examined the issue of instructional supervision in primary schools of Onueke educational zone of Ebonyi state. The purpose of the study was to find out the problems militating against effective instructional supervision in the zone. The findings revealed that inadequate personnel, poor funding, poor transportation network and inadequate materials are the problems hindering the effective supervision of institutions. Finally the paper recommended among others that government should recruit more qualified personnel into the supervisory unit in different Education Board or ministry.

Insecurity

Ogunode (2020), observed that insecurity is one of the major problem facing the administration of primary schools in Nigeria. Effective administration of basic education in Nigeria is frustrated by the insecurity challenges facing the country especially the Northern part of the country. Many Basic schools have been closed down. Educational officers cannot travel to areas where they are supposed to travel to for administrative functions because of insecurity challenges. One of the most insecurity challenges facing the country is the Boko-Haram group. The militant group, Boko

Haram, has carried out violent attacks in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria. Thousands of Nigerians have been killed, and many more have been forced to flee their homes. Schools have been the primary target of the attacks. Since 2011, Boko Haram, whose name means ‘Western Education is Forbidden, has expanded its attacks to the direct target of schools. It has resulted in the killing and abduction of hundreds of teachers and students and the destruction of school buildings and teaching materials. As a result of increased attacks on education, all schools in Borno State were closed from the 14th March 2014, and roughly 253,000 children were out of school in the 2013–2014 school year (Borno SUBEB). By the end of 2014, Adamawa, Yobe and Borno State Universal Basic Education authorities have reported a total of 338 schools destroyed. Also, at least 196 teachers and over 314 learners killed and more than 276 learners abducted. The situation has further fuelled the perception of schools as ‘danger zones’ and threatens the gains achieved by targeted school enrolment drives in northern Nigeria (Thisday, 2018). High rate of unemployment and weak school security are some of the factors responsible for insecurity and attacks on schools.

Corruption

The problem of corruption in the administration of universal basic education programme in Nigeria is a very big challenge facing the development of the programme. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020), submitted that institutional corruption is the problem preventing effective administration of education in Nigeria because funds allocated for provision of infrastructural facilities and services in the management and implementation of educational programme are been diverted by officers or political office holder within the institutions. The common forms of corrupting in the Nigerian educational institutions are fund diversion. Corruption on fund diversion has been reported in all the forms of education in Nigeria. At the early child and basic education, there was allegation of funds diversion meant for the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) by the education Secretary of Sabon-Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) after investigators traced school feeding funds to bank accounts linked to him. At the junior secondary school education, report has it that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, on Monday arraigned a former Secretary to the Government of Edo State, SSG, Simon Imuekeme, and three others before the Edo High Court on an eight-count charge that borders on diversion of N113 million allocated for a particular project in the state. They were accused of fraudulently diverting the said sum to a project not covered by the intervention funds allocated by the State UBEC (Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar 2020; Premiumtime 2014). Weak monitor and evaluation mechanism and weak institutions are some of the causes of corruption in the school administration.

Poor Learning Outcome

The poor learning outcome among the children of Basic education in Nigeria is another challenges the programme is facing. Ogunode (2020), and World Bank (2017), observed that the quality of basic education, measured in terms of student learning outcomes, is low in Nigeria. According to international standards, children who have completed grade 3 are expected to be fully literate. Yet in Nigeria only 66 percent of public school students can read at least one of three words and 78 percent can add single digits after completing grade 4 (NEDS, 2015). In terms of variation across the States, a test administered to grade 4 pupils as part of the 2013 Service Delivery Indicator (SDI) Survey produced an overall low score of 32 percent, with the two southern states leading the ranking (59 and 54 percent) and the two northern states with significantly lower scores (23 and 20 percent). Alsom Asodike, Juliana, &Ikpitibo, Clinton (undated) cited Omotayo, Iheberene and Maduewesi (2008), reported that poor implementation strategy, management and lack of assurance as responsible factors that contributed to the failure of the UBE to attain its goals since its inception more than 10 years ago. Other predicaments include financial problems in terms of misappropriation and embezzlement of funds, and financial crimes of all sorts being perpetuated by those in authority. As a result, there is an absence of adequate financial resources to implement programmes and policies that will promote this level of education. Also incompetence on the part of some teachers and head-teachers leads to poor quality assurance, delivery and supervision in the system.

Poor Capacity Development of Teacher

The poor human capacity development of Basic teachers is another challenge facing the realization of the objective of Universal Basic education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Adah, Audu, Wama (2020), submitted that there are many challenges facing the staff development programme for primary school teachers in Nigeria. Some of the challenges include; inadequate funding, lack of strategic plans, poor implementation of staff development policies, institutional corruption, poor internal school administration of staff development programme for teachers, unstable educational policies, political instability and lack of data/information on training need gaps of schools. To solve these challenges, it was recommended that: the government should embark on need training assessment of basic schools, develop an action plans, develop a financial plan for implementation, set up effective monitoring and evaluation system, ensure policies continuity and fight all institutional corruption in the ministries. Ogunode, Adah, Audu, Wama (2020) observed that inadequate funding is one of the major problem preventing effective implementation of staff development programme for primary schools teachers in Nigeria. The inadequate funding of education in

Nigeria is responsible for many problems affecting the educational development in the country. Staff development programme is one of the programme that the government of Nigeria have not showed much commitment. The annual budgetary allocation for staff development programme in the ministries of education across the three tier of government have been grossly inadequate. Grants released by the government to Secondary schools education are far below expectation. The reason for this is not farfetched, because different sectors are competing with education. What government allocates to education falls short of UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of a country's national budget. John (2017) opined that the funds from the federal government to the education sector and basic schools in specific are not enough.

Inadequate Instructional Material

Lack of instructional materials in majorities of Basic education schools is a very big problem facing the development of basic education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020), observes instructional materials are educational resource that teachers employ to present their lessons with the aims of making it simple for the learners. Instructional materials are organized educational resources that make teaching interest for the learners. Instructional materials are materials that makes students comprehend what the teaching is teaching more. Instructional materials are key component of educational institutions that help to simplify teaching. Instructional support the implementation of teaching programme in the schools. In is unfortunate that these instructional materials are in shortage in many public school in Nigeria. Adeleke (2015), reported that inadequate instructional materials is one of the problem facing the Nigerian educational institutions because schools administrators are not provided with adequate funds to buy the different instructional materials teachers need to implement the teaching programme with.

Ways Forward

To address these challenges, the paper recommended the following: adequate funding, employment of more professional teachers, adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision, and adequate security of schools and prevent corruption in the administration.

- a) Adequate Funding:
- b) The government should increase the funding of Basic education. More funds should be channeled to the development of infrastructural facilities.
- c) Employment of more professional teachers
- d) The government should employ more professional teachers and deploy them to Basic school across the country.

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- e) Provision of Adequate Infrastructural Facilities
 - f) The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities in all the Basic education schools across the country. Infrastructural facilities like this: Stable internet services, electricity, water supply, gas and modern laboratories, workshops, research apparatus should be ensured and provided.
 - g) Effective Supervision
 - h) For the government to achieve the objectives of the Basic education in Nigeria there is need for effective supervision, the various agencies of government established for supervisory functions and inspection has to been reformed and restructure to execute their functions well.
 - i) Adequate Instructional Materials:
 - j) Instructional materials are very important for teaching and learning at the Basic schools. Government should provide adequate instructional materials for all the basic schools in the country.
 - k) Improve Security:
 - l) Adequate security should be provided for all the basic schools in the country especially those in the north east-part of Nigeria.
 - m) Fight Institutional Corruption:
 - n) The government should fight all institutional corruption in educational institutions across the country through the use of the anti-craft agencies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this presentation discussed the challenges facing the Basic education programme in Nigeria. Inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, shortage of infrastructural facilities, high population of students, poor supervision, insecurity, corruption, poor learning outcome, poor capacity development of Basic school teachers and inadequate instructional Material were identified as the challenges facing the Universal Basic education programme in Nigeria. To solve these challenges, the paper recommended the following: adequate funding, employment of more professional teachers, adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision, and adequate security of schools and prevent corruption in the administration.

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