

## The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in Nigeria: an Appraisal of Human and Material Resources

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### Abstract

**T**he quality of education in any nation is determined by the provision of sufficient human and material resources, alongside the efficient utilization of these resources. This paper, therefore, appraises human and material resources for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria. Despite the perceived efforts of the UBE programme in Nigeria such as the provision of infrastructure and instructional/library resource materials in schools, drawbacks are still being observed. Such drawbacks include lack of easy access to the UBE programme fund by state governments and poorly constructed/lack of classrooms. The paper concludes by suggesting ways through which the implementation of the UBE programme may be achieved. One suggestion is that recruitment of teachers for the UBE programme should always be carried out on merit.

## Introduction

The quality of education in a nation is determined by the provision of sufficient human and material resources alongside the efficient utilization of these resources. It suffices to say that the availability of the resources is dependent upon finance. Hodges (2001) reports that complaints abound on the serious under-funding of the education sector in Nigeria which has culminated into poor quality performance of learners.

A call on nations by the Dakar Framework for Action to develop Plans of Action on Education for All (EFA) before the end of 2002 gingered many countries, Nigeria inclusive, into developing or strengthening existing plans for the realization of EFA.

EFA goals include (Igbuzor, 2006; UBEC, 2012):

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill programmes;
- Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girl's full and equal access to the achievement in basic education of good quality;
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The EFA goals are in line with the fifth national goal of Nigeria which is aimed at building a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). Hitherto, and in line with pursuing the goals of EFA, the government of Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education programme in September 1999.

In 2004 the Federal Government of Nigeria instituted the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) as an agency saddled with the responsibility of co-ordinating all aspects of the implementation of UBE programme. The vision of the commission is to promote uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in the country. Its mission, as an intervening, co-ordinating and monitoring agency, is to progressively improve the capacity of States, Local Government Agencies and Communities in the provision of unfettered access to high quality education in Nigeria.

Barely three (3) years to the target year (2015) for the achievement of the EFA goals, the pertinent question is this: "What is the impact of the UBE programme in Nigeria especially as regards human and material resources?"

## What Is Universal Basic Education?

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a nine (9) year basic education which aims to provide free and compulsory education at the primary level (class 1-6) and Junior Secondary School level (JSS 1-3). The target population age is the school-going age which Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) puts at 6-11 for the primary school. This implies that a student entering the first year of JSS (JSS1) is about 12 years.

Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education (2000), in its implementation guidelines for the UBE, outlined the specific objectives of the UBE programme thus:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- Providing free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- Reducing, drastically, the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved relevance, equality and efficiency.
- Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, education, and ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

For the objectives outlined above to be achieved conditions

outlined by Federal Ministry of Education (2000) must be met. These conditions include:

- Prudent management of education funds;
- Ensuring adequate funding
- Producing adequate infrastructure facilities.
- Providing enriched curricular;
- Procurement of textbooks and other instructional materials; and
- Taking proper care of teachers; their recruitment, education, training, retraining, motivation and other needs.

## Perceived Efforts of UBE in Nigeria

Efforts have been made by the government of Nigeria to meet up with the objectives of the UBE. UNESCO(2006) reports that the percentage of primary school teachers with the minimum qualification (Nigeria Certificate of Education) has improved from 35.7% in 1996 to 50.8% in 2002.

The financial resources for education are provided by the trio of Federal, State and Local Governments of Nigeria, although a significant proportion of the resources are provided by non-governmental agencies. According to UNESCO (2006) Federal Government policy decisions determine the sources of funds for education. The 2% levy paid on the profit of companies as education tax is managed by the Federal government of Nigeria through the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which decides on budgetary allocations to various education sectors and levels.

The lack of an adequate legislative and policy framework to ensure that States spend equitably on the education and focus more in basic education led to the Federal government of Nigeria to

sponsor the UBE bill which has been passed into law (UBE Act) and has the following implications (UNESCO, 2006):

- The establishment of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to be financed by the Federal, State and Local Governments as a percentage of the first charge on the contribution from Federation Accounts as appropriated by the National Assembly.
- The UBEC shall determine appropriate modalities for sharing the Federal Government UBE resources among States and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) in the most equitable manner.
- The funds shall be utilized for all aspects of the UBE programme, especially teachers' salaries nationwide, overheads including allowances and school friendly environments, and pensions.
- The administration of salaries shall be through State Primary Education Boards (SPEBs); allowances through Local Education Authorities (LEAs); and classroom furniture etc in consultation with SPEBs and LEAs.
- 20% of the funds will be disbursed to 25 educationally disadvantaged states.

UBEC (2012) reports that the UBE programme activities in Nigeria have led to the following achievements:

- Transformation of the educationally terrain as it affects basic education in the area of school infrastructural development. This has been

achieved through judicious use of Federal Government of Nigeria – UBE intervention funds. For the first time Basic Education has a quantum of funds being pumped in by Federal and State governments.

- Improved infrastructural developments have led to increased access to basic education.
- Teacher professional development is accorded priority attention as a percentage of the intervention fund goes directly to in-service training of teachers in all states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)
- Education of the girl-child and other disadvantaged group is being given greater attention than ever before.
- There is effective monitoring of UBE implementation to ensure quality.

During the period 2005-2009 the following have been specifically achieved through the utilization of the UBE intervention and counterpart funds in thirty six (36) states of the federation and FCT (UBEC, 2012):

- Infrastructure: 41,009 new classrooms were renovated; 59,444 classrooms were renovated; 1, 139,196 sets of furniture were provided for pupils and teachers; 14,769 toilets were constructed; and 996 boreholes were sunk.
- Instructional/play materials: 77,570,540 instructional/play materials were provided.
- Teacher professional development: 1,493,352 teachers were trained.

- Provision of Mathematics, English resource Language and Activity-Based Science textbooks were provided for primaries 4 and 5 pupils.
- Library Resource Materials: 1,710,091 assorted library resource materials for Junior Secondary School (JSS) were provided.
- Deliverables from Special Education (Physically Challenged Children Fund): 368 schools/centres benefited from this Fund. 20,639 children were enrolled into the UBE programme; 710 classrooms and 344 rooms were provided; 36 boreholes/hand pumps were provided; 263 toilets/bathrooms were provided; 3,616 sets and 1,259 sets of furniture were respectively provided for pupils and teachers; 2,266 beddings were provided; 75, 255 instructional materials and 14,641 equipment (Computers, Wheelchairs, Braille machines, TV sets, Radio sets, etc) were provided; and 6,247 teachers were trained.

On the availability of human resources for the UBE programme in Nigeria, Jaiyeoba(2007) and Ganjang & Ganjang (2006) in separate researches revealed that necessary manpower abound for the success of the programme. Jaiyeoba(2007) is of the view that an enormous number of teachers have been, of recent, employed in almost all the states of Nigeria for the purpose of the UBE programme. Although the total number of teachers available for the programme in primary schools in Bokkos Local Government Area, Plateau state is high, Ganjang &

Ganjang(2006) revealed that 80% of the teachers are professionally qualified.

### Setback

The strides made for the success of the UBE programme in Nigeria are commendable. However, it is sad to note that barely three (3) years to the new target date (2015) for the achievement of EFA goals, the laudable provision of policies and the physical efforts by stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the UBE programme in Nigeria, drawbacks are still vividly being observed.

According to UNESCO (2006), many of the activities of the UBE programme designed to meet the EFA goals cannot be implemented within the targeted time frame because of lack of funds. Due to the political nature of the decisions that determine investment in decentralized education management, targets are often thwarted by what Adeniyi (2002) described as “ethnicity (entrenched in the concept of educationally disadvantaged regions, nepotism and opportunity for embezzlement)”. Little or no wonder at all, that as at the end of the year 2011 N34.1 billion UBE outstanding funds were still being inaccessible to the 36 states of Nigeria and the FCT. Table 1 shows the unaccessed UBE funds, as at October 2011, by the state governments of Nigeria.

**Table 1: Outstanding state UBE grants.**

State	Amount( N)	tate	Amount(N)
Abia	1,465,294,572.80	ano	2,297,727,004.80
Adamawa	311,390,985.10	atsina	311,390,985.54
Akwa Ibom	1,465,294,572.80	ebbi	634,568,887.64
Anambra	1,465,294,572.80	ogi	622,172,951.18
Bauchi	311,755,850.54	wara	635,294,572.80
Bayelsa	1,630,091,868.80	agos	634,568,904.54
Benue	2,113,909,436.80	asarawa	2,297,727,004.80
Borno	333,294,563.84	igbi	771,881,374.78
Delta	311,390,985.18	gwi	1,330,889,766.74
Enugu	3,111,390,985.54	ndo	311,390,985.54
Ebonyi	2,297,727,005.24	sun	934,172,951.18
Edo	634,568,886.54	yo	311,390,985.54
Ekiti	934,172,951.18	lateau	634,568,886.98
Enugu	1,465,294,573.80	ivers	934,172,951.18
FCT(Abuja)	311,390,985.03	okoto	591,755,849.54
Gombe	634,568,889.98	araba	484,766,854.86
Imo	1,228,972,951.14	obe	634,568,886.98
Jigawa	634,568,886.98	amfara	965,673,426.38
Kaduna	311,390,985.54		

Source: The Nation, 7(2103), p.1, 4.

For ease to access the funds, the governors of the states requested the Federal Government to revisit two conditions {sections 9(b) and 11(2) of the UBE Act} for accessing the funds.

Alli (2011) outlined the conditions, which read in part, demanded by the state governors to be revisited as follows:

- The Universal Basic Education Commission shall receive block grant from the Federal Government and allocate to states and local governments and other relevant agencies implementing the UBE in accordance with an approved formula as may be laid down by the Board of the Commission and approved by the Federal Executive Council, provided that the Commission shall not disburse such grant until it is satisfied that the earlier disbursements have been applied in accordance with the provisions of this act.
- For any state to qualify for the Federal Government block grant pursuant to section 1 (1) of this section such state shall contribute not less than 50 percent of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project.

There were many outcries from other stakeholders on the demand of the state governors as, according to Alli (2011), the governors were after the funds which would serve as alternative source of funds for other projects. Fears were also allayed that politics was creeping into UBE funds. Jaiyeoba (2007) opines that, although the government of Nigeria is sincere with UBE financial policy, there is no transparency in the disbursement of UBE fund. The consequence is that schools have limited funds for execution of some UBE projects. The recently unveiled N 1.07 trillion fuel subsidy

fraud by the Nigerian House of Representatives, the lower legislative arm, (Alli & Onanuga, 2012) is a pointer to the lack of commitment to the UBE programme.

In a research carried out on the availability of resources in Bokkos L.G.A. of Plateau State for the success of the UBE programmes, Ganjang & Ganjang (2001) ascertained that although 72.8% classrooms were available for the UBE programme majority of the classrooms were either poorly constructed or in a state of disrepair. Implication is that learning may not be effective. The study (Ganjang & Ganjang, 2001) also revealed that pupils of different classes are combined to occupy one class even where the teachers are available. Under this condition, there is overcrowding the lesson interference.

It has also been revealed that facilities such as tools, books, equipment, libraries, workshop, toilets facilities and laboratories are inadequate or in non-existence (Ganjang & Ganjang, 2001; UNESCO, 2006, Jaiyeoba, 2007). This could be as a result of leakages in the fund budgeted for the implementation for the UBE programme as corroborated by Jaiyeoba (2007), or lack of access to the UBE grants. 74.9% of the schools understudied (Ganjang & Gangjang, 2001) do not have infrastructural facilities.

Despite the positive impact of decentralized management policies on all structures involved in the EFA process, decentralized teacher management has militated against the full implementation of EFA. One way in which decentralized teacher management has militated against full implementation of EFA is by the injection of parochial and ethics

sentiments into the recruitment of teachers for the UBA programme.

### The Way Forward

The following are suggestions proffered for possible success of the UBE programme in Nigeria:

- Jaiyeoba (2007) found out that though government sincerely devotes adequate fund for the UBE programme, lack of transparency in the disbursement of the fund is setting back the achievement of the UBE scheme. Government should, therefore, put in place efficient monitoring team for transparent disbursement and effective utilization of fund meant for the UBE programme.
- Government, as a matter of urgency, should erect facilities and/or renovate existing ones for the effective implementation of the UBE programme.
- Government should step-up efforts in training and re-training of teachers, especially science, technology and mathematics teachers. This will enable the teachers to acquire new ideas, method of teaching and skills.
- Recruitment of teachers for the UBE programme should be done based on merit. This will enhance effective teaching/learning in the schools.

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