
UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The Obasanjo led democratic government in Nigeria attached great importance to a mere functional primary education programme considering its objectives for preparing recipients for life, and or giving them opportunity for transition. No wonder that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched for implementation nation – wide in the year 1999. UBE is being conceived as a people – oriented programme. The motive behind the UBE is to ensure that every citizen of the world enjoys the fundamental human rights to education. The paper recognized the central position of civic responsibility in the successful implementation of the UBE programme and appraises the need to effectively supervise, monitor and evaluate teachers on regular and continuous basis as ways of enhancing their productivity. It offers suggestions of ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers for a result oriented UBE programme.

The achievement of educational goals has been one of the important targets of most countries of the world (Adeyemi, 1999). And according to Ajibade (1993), education is the avenue by which any nation could permanently close the door of poverty and ignorance and at the same time open that of prosperity in terms of economic buoyancy, social advancement and civilization. The needed manpower that is capable of turning round the economy of any nation is produced through education (Fadipe, 1999). Education is regarded as the producer of the manpower that is needed for the socio-economic development of a nation. Through education, ignorance is eliminated, skills for productivity and comfort acquired (Shokunbi, 1999).

Education certainly, can be seen as part of the main levers of bringing about change. It remains the bedrock of growth and development of any nation (Fadipe, 1999). And according to Oje (1991) Education is no doubt the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potentials and to all kinds of rights and power be they political, economic, religious or social.

Education on the whole, is an indispensable edifice upon which a rapid, progressive and sound development in all its ramifications can be achieved (Adeyemi, 1999). In a fundamental sense according to Akintola (1981), education is the cultural process by which successive generations of men take their place in history. It is the aggregate of processes through which an individual acquires knowledge, values, attitudes, and all other forms of behavior that are positive values to the society to which he belongs (Fafunwa, 1974). Through education therefore, man acquires the civilization of the present and makes the civilization of the future. The primary purpose of education is to impart knowledge, skills, attitudes and ability to transmit certain values. In the traditional Nigerian society, education was seen as a means to an end and itself as FUNCTIONALISM was the main guiding principle (Ajayi, 1998).

The National Policy on Education

The federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as a tool par excellence for the attainment of individual and national development (Sani, 1994, Ajayi, 1992: Adeyemi, 1999). This adoption led to the formulation of the National Policy on Education.

Summing up the national objectives of Nigeria's education, as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) therefore, Taiwo (1993) described education as the integration of individual into a sound and effective citizen.

The broad objectives of Nigeria's education include the following:

- (a) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and society;
- (b) The training of the mind in building valuable concepts, general actions and understanding of the world around us;
- (c) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in his society; and
- (d) Acquisition of relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world technology (N. P. E. 2004).

It would be noted that the Nigeria's education is being confronted with so many problems which is affecting the realization of the national objectives on education as stated above and subsequently, affecting the political, economic and social development of the nation.

The Universal Basic Education

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) has been conceived as the people's oriented programme. The motive behind the UBE is to ensure that every citizen of the world enjoys the fundamental human rights to education. The UBE takes care of

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aspects of Early Childhood Education to Junior Secondary School levels of the schools system which have become a concern for all, the reason being that schools' system at all levels have degenerated in terms of infrastructure, facilities, teaching materials etc.

The Editorial of the Comet Newspaper of February 8, 2000, cited Professor Emmanuel Fagbamiye for giving out statistics at a lecture to the effect that about 22 percent of Nigeria's estimated 420,000 primary school teachers were found to be unqualified in 1977 according to 1999 study, about 160,000 or roughly 38 percent have Teacher Grade II Certificate, while 30.5 percent, or 128,000, holds the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE).

The Comet Edition quoted Professor Fagbamiye as drawing the conclusion that, "the implication of the foregoing in the further deterioration all – round as the shortfall may get worse, give the dwindling registration for education in Colleges of Education and Universities. Enrolment in Colleges of Education dropped from 13,371 in 1997/98 to 1998/99. The fall in University applications for placements in teacher education programmes is more staggering: from 29,951 in 1994/95 to 21,366 in 1996/97 crashing to 3,198 to 1998/98. Applications from prospective male students dropped by about a half in one year. Fagbamiye (2002), said that, Even if qualified teachers are available but are not adequately motivated and remunerated, public schools will continue to lose their credibility and this is at a low ebb even now.

The Comet Editorial concluded that:- An acute shortage of teachers, such as exists currently at the primary translates into a poor and shaky foundation in the education of the Nigerian Child, at the secondary level, it does mean young Nigerians are not well prepared for the tertiary education that should equip them for professional, managerial and academic positions.

The sum of all this is that, the quality of the nation's manpower is seriously ineffective and discounted. Low enrolment in teachers' education and ability to retain trained teachers in service negate investment in education. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) of the federal Government will be imperiled ab initio – meaning that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) will therefore be seen as a solution to all Nigeria's education problems.

The UBE in Nigeria

According to Anyanwu, C.N. (2000), the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was launched on 30th September, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo to equip individual with the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes that may enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives in their communities, thereby contributing to the development of Nigerian society. UBE must

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not be seen as limited to formal schooling. Neither can it be viewed as a narrow avenue for the acquisition of literacy”.

The UBE entails the following:

- An enlarged view of Education to integrate formal and informal possibilities for the development of human potential;
- An affair that is not confined to orthodox education agencies, but which requires the input of other socio-economic development sector.
- An affair that is a lot more than government’s business, but that of non-government organization and the entire civil society;
- A strong emphasis on LEARNING, that is success in acquiring basic skills of literacy, numeracy and essential life skills;
- LEARNING – TO – LEARN as the most valuable end result of Education.

The objectives of the UBE programme include the following:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
- The provision of Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system;
- Catering for young persons who have had to interrupt their schooling as well as other out-of-school children/adolescents, through appreciate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skill as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. In view of these objectives.

Nigeria’s UBE is conceived as a people’s programme, and so the entire citizenry has to take full ownership of it. Perhaps this is why the slogan for the programme is EDUCATION FOR ALL IN THE BUSINESS OF ALL. Nwaboku and Abari (2000), state the implementation guidelines of the UBE scheme (1999) thus:

- i. Public enlightenment and social mobilization
- ii. Data collection and Analysis
- iii. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation
- iv. Recruitment, Education, Training.
- v. Retraining, Motivation of Teachers,
- vi. Infrastructural Facility

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- vii. Enriched Curricula;
- viii. Textbook and Instructional Material Provision;
- ix. Improved Finding; and
- x. Management of the entire process

Realising this, the perception of the Nigeria Government under the democratic role of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in this new millennium is that of attaining greater height in the socio - economic and national development. The perception of the administration is also focused at lifting the country/nation with great and dynamic economy and with full opportunities for all citizens. The 'magic' is expected to launch Nigeria on a critical path of rapid and sustainable economic development (Oladipo, 1991). The role of education in this direction cannot be under – rated. To achieve these objective therefore, the Obasanjo regime launched the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria (U.B.E.).

UBE and Civic Responsibility

Civic responsibility relates to the responsibility of a citizen. A citizen is a member of a nation born in that country or a descent of that country. Citizenship is a relationship between an individual and a defined by law of that state with corresponding duties and right in that state. Citizenship implies the state of freedom accompanying responsibility.

According to Marshall (1994), citizenship is the status bestowed on the individual who has full membership rights in the community. Principal grounds for acquiring citizenship (apart from intemational transaction such as transfers of territory or option) are; birth within a certain territory, descent from a citizen parent, marriage to a citizen and naturalization and generally, political rights such as suffrage and the right to hold public offices are predicted upon citizenship are allegiance and military duty.

A citizen must know his civic responsibilities as well as his rights. Some of the responsibilities include the following:

- obeying the law enforcement agent
- must work
- must obey the national flag
- must obey the national anthem
- must not kill
- must not steal
- must not forcefully acquire other people's property;
- must seek permission from the government before he can acquire a parcel of land
- must not violate laws
- must register birth

- must register death
- must obtain international passport and visa from immigration office before he can travel out of the country, etc.

However, to be able to obey his civic responsibilities, a citizen must be educated to a certain extent. An educated person is a person who is able to fulfil the objectives of self-realisation, human relationship economic efficiency and civic responsibility as applied to such as the citizen's responsibility to his fellowmen, to his society and country. His responsibility for developing a tolerant, scientific, critical, sympathetic, a cooperative attitude within himself, and his responsibilities for developing an unswerving loyalty to the democratic way of life.

An educated citizen should be able to put into practice all that is learnt through education in order to produce a stable society in those turbulent days of conflicting national ideologies. The issue is that education tends to centre more and more on the area of the individual and the citizen. That individual must however know his rights.

These rights include:

- i. Civil rights e.g freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of movement etc.
- ii. Political rights e.g rights to vote and be voted for.
- iii. Social rights e.g right of choice to marriage, and choice of spouse(s), etc.

A citizen after being educated automatically becomes transformed as education is a process whereby an individual through the primary, secondary and tertiary stages becomes transformed to make him fit to live in the society. Education is training; education comes through body and instruction. Education involves series of experiences that enable a person to better understand new experience. Education involves growth and development. Education involves day-to-day activities.

In the context of UBE programme, civic responsibility involves equipping an individual with knowledge, skills and attitudes that may enable him to live meaningful and fulfilling life in his community, thereby contributing to the development of Nigerian society. And according to UBE objectives, citizens must be developed and have a strong consciousness for education, and ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethnical, moral and civil values needed for laying a solid foundation for life long learning. When all citizenry is educated, a strong and virile nation would be built; there will be improvement in the economy and civic responsibilities of the entire citizenry would be taken.

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Civic responsibilities under the UBE has great implications for its success as the UBE itself is conceived as the people's oriented programme. Every citizen must be educated and must enjoy the fundamental human rights to education; as the UBE is education prior to secondary school. The UBE also takes care of aspects of Early Childhood Education to the Junior Secondary Schooling. That is providing free and compulsory education for all. This therefore implies that every citizen has right to education from infancy to the Junior Secondary Schooling and then work thereafter. Therefore the programme must be well understood and this can only be achieved if this system of functional literacy for Nigerians is adequately planned and the citizen's civic responsibilities taken.

Political Instability and Inconsistency in the UBE

Political instability and inconsistency of education policies has become problem that has come to stay in Nigeria since the attainment of independence. As government changes, so exits discontinuity in the long term or systematic policy plans and their implementation.

According to Adepaju (1999), the political climate in Nigeria has not been conclusive enough to give room for continuity of good educational plans and policies because every successive political leader (civilian and military) wanted to be identified with new policies and thereby suspend the existing ones.

It is hoped that if the present nascent democracy in Nigeria allowed to flourish there may be relative stability in the body polity of the country and its subsequent effect of consistency on the educational policy of the federal government on the UBE programme. State governments too, should integrate the scheme adequately into their educational programmes. But if the reverse is the situation, Nigeria is bound to take several steps backwards in the effective planning and implementation of the scheme. This therefore calls for strong determination to achieve the goals of the scheme on the parts of Nigerians, the present and future administrations.

Funding of the Universal Basic Education

For the facts that the UBE programme involves free and compulsory education for all at the primary and junior secondary schools level of the school's system is however, a cause for concern. The implication is the funding of QUALITATIVE education for one of the world's most populous and developing countries – Nigeria. A fundamental issue in the funding education is the ability of the government to deliver its programmes as stipulated in the policy. This factor is related to the National income and the buoyancy of the economy and the economic growth rates in different sectors.

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The implementation Blue print for the Universal Basic Education Scheme (1999) as quoted by Nwaboku and Abari (2000) is emphatic on sharing formulae for the funding of various components of the scheme. For instance, the financial commitment for infrastructural provision (classroom and learning centres) was distributed as follows

Primary School (25%)	-	Federal Government (75%) State Government (25%)
Junior Secondary School (75%)	-	Federal Government (25%) State Government (75%)
Adult Literacy (75%)	-	Federal Government (25%) State Government (75%)
Nomadic Education	-	Federal Government (100%)

The financial implications require adequate planning for its successful implementation. For effectiveness, deliberations on funding should not only emphasize on sourcing for funds but attention should also be paid to the actual deployment for such funds for the achievement of the set objectives. Such therefore, should be put into proper perspective before the implementation of the programme. And adequate and realistic funding strategy as well as ordered funding pattern needs to be evolved and must necessarily involve all interested parties in order to see the UBE programme through successfully (Nwaboku and Abari, 2000).

Conclusion

The purpose of education is much concerned with the training of the body and spirit as with the mission of knowledge. Education aims at producing individuals who are physically, emotionally, mentally and socially balanced and who have the full membership in their society. The UBE is meant to equip individual with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that may enable him to live meaningful and fulfilling life in his community, thereby contributing to the development of the Nigerian society. Education is seen as an instrument of reformation if the citizens are educated and it is then they would be able to produce critical skills needed for growth and development of any nation and aim of UBE, which is functional literacy would be achieved.

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