CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN SOME SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTHERN SENATORIAL ZONE OF NASARAWA STATE

Akpa Emeka Christopher
Department of Education Management, Federal University of Lafia,
emyofnigeria@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges and prospect of the implementation of universal basic education in some selected junior secondary school in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa state. Specifically, the study sought: to determine the level of universal basic education. The study was carried out in southern senatorial zone, namely: Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia and Obi local government Areas in Nasarawa State. The population for the study comprised 735 teachers and 68 principals using random sample technique. The study sampled 246 teachers and 15 principals. The data was collected by use of questionnaire. Percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the two research questions. Some of the findings of the study showed that there are positive impacts of Universal Basic Education programme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State, an increase in equity in participation by students of different backgrounds. Some challenges facing the full implementation of universal basic education in the zone include poor education statistics, inadequate publicity, inadequate funding, and inadequate infrastructure. The Study recommends among others that fund available should be effectively utilized at the targeted areas they are meant for; more teachers should be employed for the UBE programme.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education (UBE), Junior Secondary Schools, Nasarawa State, Southern Senatorial Zone, Teacher–Pupil Ratio

Introduction

The burning desire of Nigerians to develop education could be dated back to 1955 when Chief Obafemi Awolowo introduced Universal Primary Education in the western region. This scheme was a great success in the Western Nigeria because there was massive enrollment of pupils and the rate of out of school wards reduce to the lowest minimal. Seeing the huge success of the scheme in the western region the then government of Eastern Nigeria headed by Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe launches the Universal Primary Education in 1957 but was a total failure in the eastern region because of poor statistical data, poor planning among others. Having seen the success in the western region Chief Olusegun Obasanjo the then head of states launched the Universal Primary Education in 1976. The scheme encouraged parent to enroll their wards and kids in primary school and equally failed to meet it aim and objective of the scheme because of political crises, lack of finance, inadequate statistical data among others. (Ajaya, Ayodele & Tenibiage, 2002)

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo because of his love for education when he came into power as a civilian president in 1999, he launched the Universal Basic Education to address the failure of the previous educational scheme UPE. The launching of this programme in Sokoto, Nigeria was a strong desire to achieve Education for All (EFA) and to promote basic education. This programme is to be free, universal and compulsory for all wards and children of school going age.

According to Obanya (2000) any family, parent, community, society who denies their wards, kids and children to enjoy this opportunity (Basic Education) will face the wrath of the law and will be appropriately sanctioned. For Nigeria, Junior Secondary Education was first captured in the national policy on education which was first published in 1977 and revised in 2013. Section 2 pages 12 of the policy made it clear that junior secondary education is the education received after the completion of primary education. The policy proposed that this education will be for the period of three years. In page 13 of the policy, it stated that this education would consist of Prevocational education which includes Agricultural science, Home economics, English language, Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba,

Mathematics, Basic education which include Basic technology, Information technology, Basic science, Physical education and Health education, Civic studies, Security studies, Islamic education and Christian education. French Language, cultural and Creative Art, Business Studies and Arabic studies will be optional. This field of studies have been careful arrange to help these kids to develop their skills and make them to contribute to national growth and development (NPE, 2013)
The need for the scheme in Nigeria was driven out of the desire and significant of education in the life of Nigeria youths and in the promotion of political participation, social and the nation's development. (Ochoyi & Danladi, 2008). Anterior to the launching of the UBE scheme in the country the educational programmes on ground have failed in the achievement of it aims and objectives, lofty rate of school dropouts, poor statistical data for the planning of educational programmes, political instability, school curriculum been political influenced which in most cases leads to poor graduate that cannot meet Nigerians need. This scheme was launched by Nigerians to address the above-mentioned challenges therefore making the program compulsory, free and universal for all kids, wards of school going age irrespective of their age, sex, culture, religion, colour, and language, economic and social status of the individual. This scheme will as well as cover adult education. It was equally arranged in such a way acquisition of appropriate skills that will enhance the development and growth of Nigeria as a nation. (Anaduaka and Okafor, 2013)

The key implementers of the universal basic education scheme are the thirty-six states of the federal republic of Nigeria including the federal capital territory Abuja. The commission which saddled with the responsibility of implementing the scheme is the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) which is headed by the executive secretary. For the states, it is the state Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) that is saddled with the responsibility of coordinating, administrating, directing, overseeing and implementing of the universal basic education policies in each of their states, headed by an Executive Chairman (Suleiman, 2012).

(Anaduaka and Okafor, 2013) stated that before the UBE scheme was launched a ward or kid begins lower basic education at age six or more and at the end of the basic lower, he or she graduate with a first school leaving certificate after he has taken an exam know as common entrance and this exam qualifies the child for admission into secondary education. The UBE scheme came to replace the previous scheme: the UBE programme is for a nine-year duration that involves six years of lower basic education and three years of upper basic education with the transition from lower basic to upper basic automatic, through continuous assessment.

Universal Basic Education includes the following segments of education in an orderly matter: Crèche or Day care, Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary, junior secondary and non-formal school. It is clearly seen that the scheme is not only compassionate with wards and children alone but adults who were not opportune to access formal education. (Okonkwo&Obineli, 2013)

Okoro (2010) sees universal basic education scheme as the willingness of Nigerian Government to bring to an end the era of illiteracy by increasing the knowledge of it citizens and general education opportunity of all school going wards, kids and children in Nigeria. In this study universal basic education can be seen as a scheme targeted at enhancing the quality of education through the provision of free, compulsory, and universal education for all wards, kids and children of school going age. It comprises dropout youth and adult who were not opportune or privilege to access formal education. It covers a year of pre-primary schooling, six years of lower basic education or primary education and three years of upper basic education or junior secondary education. The scheme provides the wards, children, dropout youth and adults with writing, reading and numerical skills to equip them to be contributive members of their society.

Onyeze, Ochiaka, & Ochiaka (2017) highlighted the aims of basic education as Living significant and satisfying life; contributing to the growth and development of Nigeria, obtain optimal economic,

cultural, and social benefit, discharging their civic responsibility completely. Basic Education has been a planetary objective which most African countries practices and Nigeria is part of it; the scheme is to be achieved through the Universal Basic Education. The desire of the federal government of Nigeria to introduce universal basic education scheme in the Nigerian educational system is seen on the important role education plays in the life of an individuals and in the promotion of polities, social and economic development in Nigeria. (Suleiman, 2012).

The objectives of the UBE as stated in the implementation guidelines are as follows: To inculcate all Nigerian citizens with a strong willingness for education and the promotion of education in the country, Provision of universal, compulsory, and free education for all Nigeria wards and kids of school age**,** will reduce to a large extent the high rate of school dropout in formal education through improved educational programmes, provision and caring for the learning needs of adolescents and adults who for one reasons or the other dropped out of school, guaranteeing and acquiring of relevant skills which includes communicating, numeracy, and literacy, moral and civic value for laying strong bedrock for lifelong learning in Nigeria. (NPE, 2004)

Statement of the Problem

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was introduced to ensure free, compulsory, and qualitative education for all children at the basic level. However, despite considerable investments, the implementation of UBE in Junior Secondary Schools particularly in the Southern Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State continues to face critical bottlenecks.

Firstly, there is a marked shortage of qualified teachers at the junior secondary level, as studies reveal consistently poor pupil-to-teacher ratios, with schools operating with only the minimum number of educators. This inadequacy not only undermines instructional quality but also diminishes educational outcomes. Secondly, infrastructure and teaching resources remain severely deficient. Many schools suffer from dilapidated structures cracked walls, broken roofs, and insufficient furniture with some students forced to sit on bare floors. At the curriculum level, basic instructional materials such as textbooks and learning aids remain grossly inadequate.

A further issue is the lack of oversight and enforcement, as administrative inefficiencies and erratic supervision contribute to poor teacher commitment and adherence to standards. Additionally, disarticulation between the Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Board impedes clear governance, leading to role conflicts and hampered implementation of UBE policies at the junior secondary level.

These challenges are not unique to Nasarawa; similar issues such as infrastructural decay, teacher vacancies, overcrowded classrooms, and weak resource allocation are widespread across Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa However, nascent prospects for reform and improvement are emerging. Nasarawa State's UBE Board has initiated structural reforms including the redeployment of staff for classroom instruction, unscheduled school visits, and policy driven oversight signaling a committed effort to reverse the historical trend of underperformance. The state has also embarked on a massive drive to upgrade educational infrastructure, constructing thousands of classrooms, supplying tens of thousands of pieces of furniture, and providing instructional materials particularly inclusive tools for special needs learners.

Despite these reforms, questions remain: Are such interventions translating into improved learning environments and outcomes? Do they adequately address persistent issues like teacher shortage, supervision, and administrative clarity especially at the junior secondary level in the Southern Senatorial Zone?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to look into the challenges and prospects of the implementation of the Universal Basic Education in some selected junior secondary schools in southern senatorial zone in Nasarawa State. Specifically, the study seeks to look at the following aims:

1. To determine the level of UBE program in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa State.
2. To investigate the challenges confronting the implementation of UBE program in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the level of Universal Basic Education Program in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa State?
2. What are the challenges confronting the implementation of Universal Basic Education program in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa State?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey design. This design is used for a group of individual or objects which are studies by the collection and analyzing of data from some of them believed to represent the total population. This study covered the Southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa state, Nigeria. This is because the zone/state is assumed to be educational disadvantage hence the need for quality education through the proper implementing of UBE in the zone. The zone is predominately farmers and has the total of about 815,273 populations in the 2006 census; the zone has covers five (5) local government namely: Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia, and Obi.

The population for this study consists of the stakeholders in the UBE scheme from southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the population includes Head Teachers in Junior Secondary (68) and Teachers in Junior Secondary School (735), making a total of 803.

The random sampling technique was used to draw three schools each from five (5) LGAs of the South Senatorial zone of Nasarawa State. The technique is to select a sample which represent the total population, and which can yield data that can be used for generalization to a large population. The sample size of 246 teachers and 15 principals' making the total 261 was adopted.

The study adopted questionnaire which is titled Challenges and Prospects of the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme in some selected junior secondary schools in southern senatorial zone, Nasarawa State" The researcher developed structure questionnaire which was administered to illicit response from the respondents. The questionnaire was developed on five-point scale. This was to facilitate easy analysis of responses. A total of 261 copies of questionnaire were distributed for the study and 259 were retrieved.

The instrument for this study was subjected to face validation. Face validation was carried out by two experts in the Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Management, Federal University of Lafia. The questionnaire was given by the researcher to Principals and teachers of Junior Secondary Schools. On-the spot, collection of instruments was applied to avoid loss of questionnaire

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research questions the descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, standard deviation were used.

Table 1:

Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Principals and Teachers on the level of Universal Basic Education Programme in Southern Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State

Item	Narrations	5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{X}$	STD	Remark
1.	Textbooks are supplied free to students in junior secondary schools.	440	304	60	98	26	3.58	0.69	Likely
2.	UBE scheme has ensured the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy manipulation and skills.	195	600	132	44	4	3.76	0.92	Likely
3.	UBE scheme has reduced of dropout and out of school children effectively in the zone	245	540	84	68	13	3.67	0.83	Likely
4.	UBE programme ensures that transition from primary to junior secondary school is automatic.	240	360	81	136	26	3.25	0.51	Likely
5.	UBE conduct advocacy, sensitization, and social mobilization annually to achieve maximal enrolment.	215	432	93	108	23	3.36	0.62	Likely
	Cluster mean and STD						**3.52**	**0.71**	Likely

Table 1 showed mean rating and a standard deviation of the respondents for items 1 - 5, the clustered mean and standard deviation rating of level of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State were 3.52 and 0.71 respectively. It is likely that the level of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State is positive, hence all the items on level of Universal Basic Education programme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State are likely positive, with means of: 3.58, 3.76, 3.67, 3.25, 3.36 and standard deviations of: 0.69, 0.92, 0.83, 0.51 and 0.62.

Table 2:

Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Principals and Teachers Views on the Challenges Confronting the Implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme in Southern Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State

Item	Narrations	5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{X}$	STD	Remark
6.	Teachers' salaries are paid as at when due.	190	500	84	100	18	3.44	0.73	Likely
7.	Available funds are not effectively utilized at the targeted areas e.g. texts, building, equipment.	285	464	105	62	20	3.61	0.71	Likely

8.	There are inadequate teachers for the UBE programme.	555	312	33	82	18	3.86	0.89	Likely
9.	School buildings are dilapidated and rarely refurbished.	535	320	81	70	10	3.92	0.85	Likely
10.	The UBE programmes implementation is being politicized.	360	392	108	76	15	3.67	0.67	Likely
	Cluster mean and STD						**3.70**		**Likely**

Table 2 showed a likely mean rating and a standard deviation on the respondents for items 6 – 10. The clustered mean and standard deviation ratings of challenges confronting the implementation of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State was with a mean of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.77. It is likely that there are few challenges confronting the successful implementing of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State, hence all the items on challenges confronting the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme in southern senatorial zone are likely positive with the mean of: 3.44, 3.61, 3.86, 3.29, 3.27, and standard deviations of 0.69, 0.73, 0.71, 0.85 and 0.67.

Conclusion

Regarding the research questions of the research findings, it was concluded that: it is likely that there are positive impacts of UBE programme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State; hence all the items on impacts of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa state were positive. It is likely that there are few challenges confronting the successful implementation of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State, hence all the items on challenges confronting the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State were inevitable.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made Based on the findings of the study.

1. For UBE to have more impact on the community, the schools should continue to encourage teachers to put in their best despite the limited facilities provided by government, the government should ensure more free textbooks supplies to students in junior secondary schools, ensuring that good skills and literacy are acquired. More measures should be taken to reduce incidence of dropout, ensuring that the movement from lower basic education to upper basic is automatic, more of advocacy, sensitization, and social mobilization to be done annually to achieve maximal enrolment, which might likely enhance the positive impacts of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State.
2. Salaries of teachers should be paid on time, fund available should be effectively utilized at the targeted areas they are meant for, more teachers should be employed for the UBE programme school buildings should be refurbished, and the UBE programmes implementation should not be politicized which might eventually reduce to the barest minimum the challenges confronting the implementing of UBE scheme in southern senatorial zone of Nasarawa State.

References

Ajayi, I. A., Ayodele J. B., &Tenibiaje, (2002). *Education in Nigeria: Past and present. Ado-Ekiti:* Green Line Publishers.

Anaduaka, U. S., &Okafor, C. F. (2013). The universal Basic education programme in Nigeria: problems and prospect. *JORIND 11*(1), www.transcampus.org/journals: www.agol.info/journal/Jorind

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *National Policy on Education. Federal Ministry of Education*

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National Policy on Education. Federal Ministry of Education*

Obanya, P. (2000). National press Briefing on the UBE programme. Lagos

Ochoyi, U. E., &Danladi, P. (2008). Challenges for mathematic teachers in the teaching of measurement under the universal basic education UBE scheme

Onyeze, C. N., Ochiaka, D. I., &Ochiaka, F. (2017). Evaluation of universal basic Education programme on educational development in Nigeria: a study of selected primary schools in Aku, Igbo-Etiti local government area, Enugu State. *International Journal of Business Economics and Management Research, 8* (11). www.skirec.org:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324224157

Okonkwo, M.C., & Obineli A,S. (2013). Challenges of universal basic education. *An international Multi-disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia, 7*(4), 265-273.

Okoro, D. U. (2010). *Universal basic education programmes: Policy achievement and challenges*. Yaba-Lagos: NERDC

Suleiman, H. (2012). Assessment of the implementation of the universal basic education programme in Nigeria from 1999 to 2009. *A dissertation Submitted to school of postgraduate studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.*