Universal Basic Education Board Functions: Extent of Preparation of Periodic Master Plans for Balanced and Co-Ordinated Development of Universal Basic Education in Imo State

UCHEOMA, Patricia Chinwendu[1], Prof. OMENYI, Ada Sam[2] & Prof. NWANKWO, Isaac Nwoba[3]

1-3 - Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

The study determined universal basic education board's preparation of periodic master plans for balanced and co-ordinated development of universal basic education programme in Imo state. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 304 staff of IMSUBEB. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled 'State Universal Basic Education Board's Preparation of Periodic Master Plans for Balanced and Co-ordinated Development of Universal Basic Education Questionnaire' which was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.88. The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researchers with the help of 10 research assistants. The data relating to research questions were answered using frequency count, and weighted response average while the hypothesis was tested using z-test. The findings of the study revealed among others that: Universal Basic Education Board performs to a high extent, the function of preparing periodic master plans for a balanced and coordinated development of Universal Basic Education Programme. There was also a significant difference in the mean ratings of board members and head-teachers on the Board's preparation periodic master plans for a balanced and coordinated development of Universal Basic Education Programme in Imo state. It was therefore recommended that the Board should create and apply a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria that includes both strategic goals and operational effectiveness to assess the success of master plans. They should develop an evaluation framework that integrates feedback from various stakeholders and considers both the strategic and practical aspects of master planning.

Keyword: Basic, Universal, Education, Plan, Coordination, Development

Introduction

It has been more than two decades since the Nigerian government implemented the reform in basic education, which led to the establishment of Universal Basic Education (UBE). The underwhelming performance of the UBE programme in Nigeria, particularly in terms of access, retention, completion, and attainment of objectives during the previous few decades, is a matter of concern and has been met with some unsatisfactory remarks. The World Bank assessment of the basic education reforms in Nigeria concluded that the overall outcome was unsatisfactory. The assessment identified substantial risks to development outcomes, including political instability, natural disasters, insecurity, and financial/economic crises. The ratings in terms of relevancy, efficiency, and effectiveness were filled with various appalling remarks. These issues raise questions with respect to the performance of Universal Basic Education functions in the management of Universal Basic Education Programmes in states in Nigeria.

In the majority of Nigerian states, including Imo state, extensive literature has identified various obstacles to the successful implementation of Universal Basic Education

(UBE). These challenges encompass insufficient funding, lack of infrastructure and information and communication technology resources, inadequate teacher training and availability, absence of ongoing teacher education and professional development, inadequate supervision and monitoring, gender disparities in enrollment, and, most significantly, management issues. Teachers although play a crucial role in attaining the goals of Universal Basic Education, the functions of the Imo state SUBEB (IMSUBEB) however, have a direct impact on the potential success of the UBE programme. Thus, to mitigate the problems of the UBE programme, the Board is tasked with the function of preparing periodic master plans for balanced and coordinated development of basic education.

The action plan is an essential document prepared annually by the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) as part of the requirements for accessing the UBE matching grant from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). It is a comprehensive document that describes in detail intervention projects and activities proposed to be implemented in Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE), primary and junior secondary schools across the state. The action plan is a document that should be made public by all State Universal Education Boards (SUBEBs), for citizens to be better informed in order for them to assess the relevance and effectiveness of UBE interventions. This, ultimately, helps in promoting inclusion and strengthening of public service delivery in their communities (Viennet and Pont, 2017).

The Self Help Project Unit of the Universal Basic Education is designed to involve the community and private sector in the Basic education delivery through school projects (Izuka, Agwagah and Okoye, 2022). The relevance of Self Help Project Unit cannot be exhausted since it brought about a laudable development of infrastructure in all schools including primary and secondary school. Obiakor. (2023) observed that it helps to see that teaching and learning goes on in a conducive earning environment. It also brought about population increase in the school system. Yet, the need of the population continued unabated, with a large number of out-of-school children and instigating the idea that UBE boards especially those in Imo state does not have a master plan and a good coordination of the UBE programme of the state.

Given the numerous challenges faced by the educational sector in Nigeria, including the UBE programme in Imo state, it is important to assess the performance of Universal Basic Education Board Functions in the management of UBE programme in Imo state. The problem of the study posed as a question therefore is: What is the performance of Universal Basic Education Board with respect to the management of Universal Basic Education programme in Imo state?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determined universal basic education board's preparation of periodic master plans for balanced and co-ordinated development of universal basic education programme in Imo state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Investigate the extent Universal Basic Education board prepares periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education in Imo state.
2. Determine the difference in the mean ratings of Universal Basic Education Board members and head-teachers on the extent of preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education in Imo state

Research Question.

What is the extent Universal Basic Education board prepares periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme in Imo state?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Universal Basic Education Board members and head-teachers on the extent of preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education in Imo state.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This study was carried out in Imo state, Nigeria. The population of this study comprised of 304 staff of IMSUBEB made up of 187 head-teachers and 117 board members. The sample size for the study was 304 which is the entire population. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument has two sections: section A and section B. Section A was designed to collect demographic information like the staff job area (board member or head teacher) whereas section B in both instrument contained information on extent of IMSUBEB performance of function in six different areas necessary in the management of universal basic education. The 56-items were generated from the functions of the Universal Basic Education Board as stipulated in the Imo state law by which the board was established and from literature review.

The questionnaire was validated by three experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded coefficient of internal consistency of 0.88. The instruments was administered on the respondents by the researcher with the help of 10 research assistants who are her colleagues and who were briefed on how to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The instrument were administered face to face and collected on-the-spot. This allowed the staff of IMSUBEB to submit their response to each questionnaire and those who did not completely fill the questionnaire were made to go back and fill the particular items they missed out. After submitting a completely filled questionnaire, the researcher collated and send the score pattern item by item and summated scores for analysis. The data from the field survey were collated and cleaned for analysis in line with the objectives of the study.

Data from the study was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentage and frequency count, and weighted response average was used to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using z-test. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent Universal Basic Education board prepares periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme in Imo state?

Table 1: Extent of Preparation of Periodic Master Plans for a Balanced and Co- Ordinated Development of Basic Education Programme

S/N	**Board Functions**	Board Members		Head-Teachers		**TOTAL**		**Decision**
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
1	Consult the school administrators when making plans for the managing of UBE in the state	3.36	.93	2.10	1.10	2.86	1.17	High Extent
2	Consult the local government when making plans for the managing of UBE in the state	3.31	.87	1.98	1.03	2.79	1.14	High Extent
3	Collate information on UBE across the state	3.45	.84	2.04	1.11	2.89	1.18	High Extent
4	Prepare periodic master plans for the management of UBE programme after due consultation	3.41	.88	1.98	1.03	2.84	1.17	High Extent
5	Ensure a balanced development of UBE across different local government in the state	3.70	.63	2.05	1.13	3.05	1.18	High Extent
6	Provision of a ―child-friendly school‖ that takes account of the best interest of children, particularly, the girl child	3.39	.88	1.98	1.03	2.83	1.16	High Extent
7	Liaise with state advisory committee on Universal Basic Education to ensure the review of plans put in place for the management of UBE	3.45	.84	1.93	1.00	2.84	1.17	High Extent
8	Prepare proposals to the commissioner for equal and adequate basic education opportunity in the state	3.37	.92	1.87	.87	2.78	1.16	High Extent
9	Provide for adequate education facilities in the state	3.39	.90	2.03	1.06	2.85	1.17	High Extent
10	Ensure that the basic national curricula and syllabi and other necessary instructional materials are used in early childhood care and development centres, primary and secondary schools in the state	3.52	.89	2.17	1.10	2.99	1.18	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.44	.11	2.01	.09	**2.87**		**High Extent**

Table 1 shows that with a grand mean of 3.44, board members agree that the Universal Basic Education board performs the various function connected to the preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme to a high extent. Head-teachers with a grand mean of 2.01on the other hand agrees that the Universal Basic Education board performs the various function connected to the preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme to a low extent. The grand mean of 2.87 which falls within the range of values of 2.50 to 3.49 implies that the extent to which the Universal Basic Education Board prepares periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme is high.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Universal Basic Education Board members and head-teachers on the extent of preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education in Imo state.

Table 2: Z-test Test of Significance of Difference in the Mean Ratings of Universal Basic Education Board Members and Head-Teachers on The extent of Prescription of Minimum Standards for Basic Education in Imo state in Line with National Policy on Education

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P-value	Decision
Board Members	109	3.44	0.11	273	117.88	0.0001	Sig.
Head-Teachers	166	2.01	0.09				

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of Universal Basic Education Board members and head-teachers on the extent of preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education, t (273) = 117.88, P < 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected meaning that that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of Universal Basic Education Board members and head-teachers on the extent of preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that the Universal Basic Education Board performs to a high extent, the function of preparing periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme. This finding of the study can be attributed to the fact that the UBE Board likely employs robust strategic planning processes that align with national and state educational goals. This alignment ensures that the master plans are comprehensive and effectively address the needs of the basic education system. Well-defined strategic goals and alignment contribute to the development of master plans that are both balanced and coordinated, ensuring that all aspects of the education programme are addressed. The Board may have also benefited from the expertise and experience of its members and head-teacher in educational planning and management. Experienced professionals are better equipped to develop effective and realistic master plans. The presence of skilled personnel enhances the quality and effectiveness of the master planning process, leading to well-coordinated development strategies.

The UBE Board might have also established effective data collection and analysis mechanisms to inform the development of master plans. This includes gathering data on educational needs, resources, and performance metrics. Accurate and comprehensive data enables the Board to create master plans that are responsive to actual needs and challenges, resulting in balanced development. The Board may have regularly reviewed and updated its master plans to reflect changes in educational priorities, emerging trends, and feedback from stakeholders. This reason is conceived because continuous review and updating ensure that master plans remain relevant and effective, adapting to new developments and maintaining coordination across various aspects of the education programme. Again, engaging various stakeholders, such as educators, administrators, and community representatives, in the planning process can enhance the quality and acceptance of master plans. Stakeholder involvement ensures that the master plans address diverse perspectives and needs, leading to more balanced and coordinated development. Another possible fact that can be used to explain the finding of the study is that the Board might have adopted an integrated approach to development that considers various aspects of the education system, such as curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher training, in its master planning. An integrated approach ensures that all components of the education programme are harmonized and developed in a coordinated manner, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the master plans. The findings of the study are in disagreement with the findings of Nweke, Alumode, Nnenna and Ikechukwu (2022) that the extent to which free Universal Basic Education programme have been achieved in south east is to a low extent and the extent to which the need of drop-out of basic school children have been catered for in South East is also to low extent

The findings of the study also showed that board members agree that the Universal Basic Education board performs the various function connected to the preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and co-ordinated development of basic education programme to a high extent differing significantly from the view of the Head-teachers that the Board performed this function to a low extent. The significant difference in views between board members and head-teachers can be attributed to Board members and head- teachers have different roles and responsibilities. Board members are involved in high-level planning and policy development, while head-teachers are directly engaged in the implementation of these plans at the school level. This difference in perspective can lead to varying opinions on the effectiveness and execution of master plans. Board members may focus on strategic alignment and policy formulation, while head-teachers are concerned with practical application and day-to-day challenges. Again, Board members might have more comprehensive access to information about the planning and development processes of master plans compared to head-teachers, who may have limited exposure to these aspects. Disparities in access to information can lead to differing assessments of how well the master plans are developed and implemented, influencing their views on the Board‘s performance.

The significant difference in mean ratings of both groups could also be hinged on the fact that Head-teachers may experience challenges or limitations in the implementation of master plans that board members might not fully understand or encounter. These implementation challenges can affect head- teachers‘ perceptions of the adequacy and effectiveness of the master plans, contributing to differences in views between the two groups. Board members may have a broader view of resource allocation and strategic planning, while head-teachers might perceive gaps or issues in resource distribution at the school level. Differences in perceptions of how resources are allocated and utilized can lead to differing opinions on the effectiveness of the master plans and the Board‘s performance. Board members are also likely to focus on the strategic aspects of master planning, such as long-term goals and overall coordination, while head-teachers are more concerned with operational aspects and immediate challenges. This focus on different aspects of master planning can lead to varying evaluations of the Board‘s performance, with board members emphasizing strategic achievements and head-teachers highlighting operational difficulties.

Conclusion

The UBE Board demonstrates a high level of effectiveness in preparing periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of the Basic Education Programme. This suggests that the Board's strategic planning, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement practices are robust and well-aligned with national educational objectives. Significant differences in views between board members and head-teachers highlight the diverse perspectives and experiences related to the implementation and impact of master plans. Board members and head-teachers assess the Board‘s performance from different vantage points—strategic versus operational—leading to varying evaluations of the master planning process.

Recommendations

1. The UBE Board members should actively involve head-teachers, teachers, and other key stakeholders in the development and review of periodic master plans. This inclusion will ensure that the plans address the practical needs and challenges faced at the school level. Establish formal mechanisms for stakeholder consultations, such as focus groups, surveys, and feedback sessions, to gather insights and incorporate them into master planning.
2. The Board should create and apply a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria that

includes both strategic goals and operational effectiveness to assess the success of master plans. They should develop an evaluation framework that integrates feedback from various stakeholders and considers both the strategic and practical aspects of master planning.

3. The Board should foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly reviewing and enhancing master plans based on feedback and performance data. They should implement a continuous improvement process that encourages iterative updates to master plans and responsive adjustments to changing educational needs.

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