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**PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF NINE- YEAR BASIC EDUCATION
PROGRAMME: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

For many years, there has been a national and global outcry on inaccessible educational opportunities among Nigerian citizens. With the strong faith in education as a panacea for national development has made it possible for Nigeria and beyond to embark on global partnership networking on education for all. Basic education is therefore a reliable tool for any country aspiring for greatness and if realistically translated, will wipe-out illiteracy, dropout and engender the youths to a great extent with spirit of self- reliance. This paper focuses on the concept and objectives of nine-year basic education programme in Nigeria. It carefully examined some of the giant strides made by government, local and international Communities towards UBE delivery bearing in mind its future prospects and challenges. The paper concluded that, though there are serious problems militating against the successful implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria, the prospects for Universal Basic Education programme remains high. Among the recommendations given were that concerted efforts of stakeholders is necessary to see that child's basic education becomes a reality bearing in mind its implications on national development.

Introduction

✱ Education is described as the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its people. The dawn of basic education has indeed brought accessible and affordable, qualitative and quantitative schooling to door- steps of every Nigerian child irrespective of their social and physical condition, backgrounds and affiliations. One of the inalienable basic rights of Nigerian children is access to basic education. It is on this note that government of the day is putting laudable efforts to see that any form of illiteracy and ignorance that might hinder the realization of EFA- MDGs is strongly mitigated. ✎

✎ According to Mahuta (2004), Basic educational opportunity requires that education should start on equal footing and equal treatment regardless of genetic- social condition. Basic education programme involves the provision of primary education up to the junior schooling in the realm of literacy, numeracy, skills acquisition and competency. With the dawn of universal basic education programme, the number of school – going age children increased proficiently, thus incorporating drop out of pupils who are yet to acquire the minimum competence required from a schooling system.

According to UBE Act (2004), the quest for basic education remained evidential owing to Nigeria's commitment to the World Declarations on Education for All at Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) as well as Delhi Declaration of 1991; and the follow- up conference in Beijing in 2001, requiring stringent efforts by the E-9 Countries (nine countries of the world with the largest concentration of illiterate adults) to drastically reduce illiteracy within the shortest possible time. The programme also demonstrates Nigeria's acceptance of the Durban statement of commitment (1998) and the OAU Decade of Education in Africa (1997-2006) requiring African states to broaden access to quality basic education as a foundation stone for the sustainable socio- economic development of the continent

Universal Basic Education in Context

The universal basic education (UBE) was launched and announced on 29th September, 1999 by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto. It is a crescendo of the past Universal Primary Education of 1976, although with an inclusive education that is universal, basic, free and compulsory for school-going children. It connotes the nine – year of formal schooling, provision of early childhood care development and education (ECCDE), adult literacy and non-formal programme, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants fishermen, girl –child and women education, almajirin and other category of orphans and vulnerable children.

According to Tahir (2000) in Monyei(2009) , the universal basic education signalled the commencement of a “carefully thought- out programme of restoration ” in the educational sector. It is the 9 year of the 9-3-4 system of education which goals are well- defined, illuminative, pragmatic, and alluring and has the potential of improving Nigerian citizens in all spheres of human development.

Having understood the concept of basic education, it is pertinent to also have a glance at the objectives of basic education as stated by Dare et.al (2004) in the following array:

- a. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- b. Provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school – going age;
- c. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop- out from the formal schooling system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
- d. Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- e. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, cumulative and life skills, as well as

the ethical, moral and civic life values needed for laying a solid foundation for life – long education.

Having seen the above mentioned objectives, one would therefore be tempted to ask such questions: To what extent are these objectives being achieved? Has it brought basic education closer to grass- root and How far have stakeholders being able to put in place their best to achieve its lofty objectives? The simplest answer to this is certainly to reflect on some of the remarkable giant strides recorded by government, community and international agencies in order to put Nigeria into the road- map of sustainable development.

Giant Strides in Universal Basic Education Delivery

The Nation Newspaper of Friday October, 1 (2010) asserted that the universal basic education programme aimed at providing access to, and ensuring quality of basic education throughout Nigeria. The Universal basic education commission (UBEC) is delighted to be at the fore front of this significant national intervention and welcomes groups derived to achieve education for all (EFA) and the millennium development goal (EFA) by (2015). Universal Basic Education programme has led to:

- Transformation of the educational terrain as it effects basic education in the area of school infrastructural development. This has been achieved through the judicious use of FGN – UBE intervention funds.
- Improved infrastructural development has led to increase access to basic education.
- Teacher professional development been accorded priority attention as percentage of the intervention fund goes directly to in-service training of teachers in all states and the federal capital territory (FCT). This was done in collaboration with National Teacher's Institute, Kaduna.
- Education of the girl- child and other disadvantaged groups across geo-political zones has led to increase in target schools such as Almajirin Model schools, Nomadic schools, Schools for riverine groups etc.

In a related development, ARUBE (2003) in Abdulwahab (2007) mentioned some achievements recorded over time as:

- i. Training of teachers by NTI, Kaduna through cluster –in- service model in 19 states (Oyo, Benue, Kaduna, Abia, Sokoto, Adamawa, Delta, Rivers, Imo, Plateau, Ekiti, Lagos, Borno, Jigawa, Taraba, Niger, Katsina, Bayelsa and Ebonyi) respectively .
- ii. International awareness of UBE activities through the National coordinator's participation in different international activities: Study tour to Brazil, trip to Mozambique, for Education for All (EFA), building momentum to eliminate gender gaps, symposium on non-formal education at Ouagadougou, Burkinafaso and Symposium on "Future of Education" in England among others.
- iii. Verification and disbursement of funds to over 3,600 communities under the self help projects through capacity strengthening for UBE monitoring officers, Federal Inspectors and SPEB officers on monitoring indicators.
- iv. Provision of learning and teaching materials ranging from books, learning inducing materials among others.
- v. Free meal (Feeding) in some of the states that have out of school children's percentage increased and with large number vulnerable children.

Equally, the nation Newspaper on Friday, 1, (2010 Pg B12) stated that, the commission tracks utilization of UBE intervention and states counterpart funds basic on the level of utilization. During the period 2005 – 2009, the following have been provided through the UBE Intervention and counterpart funds in 36 states and FCT. Within the period under review, the following achievements were recorded:-

- i. Infrastructural Development.
 - a. Construction of new classrooms - 41,0009
 - b. Renovations (classrooms) - 59,444
 - c. Provision of furniture
(Pupils and Teachers) - 1,139,196 sets
 - d. Construction of toilets - 14,769

e.	Sinking of boreholes	-	996
2.	Provision of Instructional/Play Materials	-	77,570,540
3.	Teacher Professional Development	-	1,493,352 teachers trained
4.	Provision of Primaries 4 & 5 Textbook s in Mathematics, English Language and Activity – Based Science	-	16,356,812
5.	Assorted Library Resource Materials for JSS-		1,710,091
6.	Deliverables from Special Education (specially Challenged Children Fund)		
a.	Number of Schools/Centres that have benefitted	-	368
b.	Enrolment	-	20,639
c.	Classrooms	-	710
d.	Resource Rooms	-	344
e.	Boreholes/hand pumps	-	36
f.	Toilets/bathrooms	-	263
g.	Furniture (pupils)	-	3,616 sets
h.	Furniture (teachers)	-	1,259 sets
i.	Beddings	-	2,266
j.	Instructional Materials	-	75,255
k.	Equipment (Computers, Wheelchairs, Braille machines, TV sets Radio sets etc)	-	14,641
i.	Teacher trained	-	6,247

In curriculum development, the following remarkable achievements have been recorded:-

- ❖ Setting up National Early Child Care minimum standards for ECCE Centres
- ❖ Approval of the Integrated Early Childhood Curriculum for 3 -5 Years by the National Council on Education (NCE) for pre-school child growth and early stimulation.

- ❖ Production and distribution of the nine-year Basic Education Curriculum materials to all Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in the 36 States and FCT.
- ❖ Introduction of the 9 –year basic education curricula into schools for step-wise implementation beginning from 2008/2009 academic year in Primary 1 and JSS 1.
- ❖ Training 40 Master- Trainers in each of the 36 States and FCT on the philosophy and content of the basic education curricular in August 2008. The State level training by Master-Trainers has also been conducted.

Giant Strides Recorded By International Partnership

The International Development Partner(IDP) such as World Bank, United Nation Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), African Development Bank(ADP)to mention but a few; have been partnering with Nigeria to make sure that MDGs Projects are achieved within time- frame. In line with these intentions, Abdulwahab (2011:7-8) stated that, the UBEC is mandated by section 11(9) (i and j) of the UBE Act 2004 to facilitate and ensure smooth collaboration with IDPs and Non- Governmental Organizations to boost Basic Education delivery in Nigeria. In keeping with the mandate, UBEC has attracted financial and technical supports from IDPs prominent among which are:

- A. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) project for the construction of additional classrooms phase 1 in Niger, Plateau and Kaduna states between 2004 to 2008.
- B. Strengthening of Mathematics and Science (SMASE) in Niger, Plateau and Kaduna states between 2006 to date.
- C. JICA project for the construction of additional classrooms phase 11 in Kano, Katsina, Oyo, Adamawa, Gombe, Ebonyi and Borno states where Kano is now on board as a pilot state.

- D. Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) supported Basic Education in the area of construction in Kogi, Katsina, Gombe and Adamawa state are being implemented.
- E. China assisted four rural primary schools in Nigeria whose intervention is in Kaduna, Katsina and Ogun state and Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
- F. The World Bank, UNICEF and USAID are supporting states to fast track the achievement of Education for All goals through support funds under the EFA- FTI Funds.
- G. Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria is supporting institutional capacity building of UBEC and SUBEB officials in educational planning strategy.

Community Efforts

The UBE Self- Help projects are designed as a strategy to involve the community and private sector participation in basic education delivery through the initiation, execution, administration and ownership of designated school projects. Basic education funding, administration and implementation is gradually becoming the responsibility not only of the government but that of the communities through Parents Teachers Association (PTAs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The Self – Help Strategy has proved to be very rewarding in providing requisite infrastructure and services within the school environment as well as galvanizing popular community support and involvement in UBE delivery. Importantly, the strategy has constituted transparency and accountability in resources management and an increasing access, quality and equity in basic education delivery. Additionally, the strategy has several deliverables in key infrastructural components and other facilities as shown in the table:

Prototypes of UBE Community Initiated Self- Help Projects between 2005-2009

S/N	PROJECT TYPE	2005 (4,407 Schools)	2006 (7,53 Schools)	2007 (6,434 Schools)	2008 (4,225 Schools)	Total (22,598 Schools)
1	Construction of new Classrooms	3,111	8,673	3,618	3,380	18,782
2	Renovation of Classrooms	3,993	6,840	34,784	4,572	50,189
3	Teachers'/Pupils Furniture Sets	60,098	126,150	127,200	94,800	408,248
4	Boreholes	79	120	87	55	341
5	Electricity	164	578	40	13	795
6	VIP Toilets	00	714	543	179	1,439

Adapted from the Nation Newspaper Friday,1, 2010 in Abdulwahab and Hauwa (2011)

Problems Encountered Under the Programme

Despite all the giant strides made by Government and stakeholders in ensuring the universalization of basic education to meet-up with Vision 20-2020 agenda, there are host of problems that if not managed might sabotage country's vision and mission. They are as follows:

- I. Non- adherence to the implementation of the UBE Act 2004 and other related matters that enshrined apprehension of parents who refuse to take their wards to school has turned to be a mirage
- II. Poor enabling environment for teaching and learning has reduces school enrolment figure.
- III. Lack of commitment and dedication of teachers in the field posse serious threat to basic educational development in Nigeria.
- IV. Inadequate teachers to meet- up with the teeming population. What are obtainable is Ratio 112 Pupils to a teacher in many parts of the country.

- V. Shortage of furniture. Most states have put –in –place befitting structures with no furniture in it. Pupils in some parts of the country are still taught on floor while teachers stay under tree
- VI. Poor remuneration, as quite number of states are yet to yield to government directives to minimum wages.
- VII. Limited involvement of the community, NGOs and private sectors in the provision and management of education owing to inadequate public enlightenment and social mobilization.
- VIII. High drop rates as a result of ill-faith norms and values in some parts of the country.
- IX. Mismanagement of funds, diversion of public resources by concerned officials and contractors delay the implementation of government projects while many are left unaccomplished.
- X. Lack of accurate and actual data of school- going children in order to determine what to plan, when, how and at what level and to whom to plan for constitutes serious impediment for planning and statistics.
- XI. Visionary blindness of our leaders coupled with inefficient educational administrators, corrupt practices has led most of the operations in the educational circle to a falling point.
- XII. Ghost workers in the programme, as most teachers do not visit their respective places of posting and yet receive benefits.
- XIII. There is dearth of instructional facilities which hamper the delivery of basic education. Where they are available, they seem not be adequate to cater for the teeming population and thus obsolete.
- XIV. Insufficient fund which is the purchasing power affect the practicality of the scheme as well.
- XV. Lack of mobility for School Based Support Officers in the discharge of their duties.

Prospects of the Universal Basic Education Programme

The UBE programme is unique in its contribution in ensuring access to quality Basic education for the good of all in a sustainable manner through;

- A. The enactment of UBE Act as a legal Document in 2004.
- B. It is an inclusive and all- embracing programme that cut across every Nigerian child irrespective of social – cultural affiliation.
- C. The programme is pivotal to the attainment of and interlinked with NEEDs, SEEDs, LEEDs, EFA and MDGs.
- D. Remarkable projects especially in the establishment of Almajirin Model Schools, Nomadic schools, Model school for girls, migrant fishermen among others is a ray of hope in reducing out of school children.
- E. Establishment of SUBEB, SPEB in different states of the federation is a laudable effort in strengthening the survival of basic education in Nigeria.

In a related development, EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports adopted some implementation approach and strategies for the successful delivery of UBE Scheme as;

- i. Enactment of necessary regulations.
- ii. Articulation of enabling policies.
- iii. Sensitization and mobilization of the target groups and stakeholders.
- iv. Adequate planning.
- v. Adequate funding.
- vi. Adequate management and management training for the managers of schools.
- vii. Optimal allocations and efficient utilization of resources.
- viii. Adequate teachers training, recruitment and motivation.
- ix. Effective coordination of activities.
- x. Encouragement and stimulation of the active participation of the private sectors, non – governmental and voluntary organizations as well as local communities in the scheme.

- xi. Establishment of working partnership and collaboration with the international communities and Donor agencies.
- xii. Regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

Implications of Basic Education on National Development

The implications of basic education on national development cannot be over emphasized bearing in mind that education is the greatest investment that a nation can give to its people. It is an instrument par-excellence in the realization of viable national development. The UBEP (2002) described UBE as an educational programme which was launched and executed by the government and people of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration. It is an expression of the desire of government to entrench viable participatory democracy and enhances national socio- economic development as a consequence of a free and compulsory regime of basic education.

Ahmed and Muhammad (2012) asserted Basic Literacy as the foundation of all skills and perquisite for economic development. That, it is helpful in the development of human relation, the economy, the potential and social structure of nations. Basic education is useful at the individual level in inculcating humanistic etiquettes and manners. Human benefits are intrinsically valuable and may also be instrumental in realising other benefits of literacy; improved health, increased political participation and so on. He further reiterated that, basic literacy can contribute to broader social – economic processes of empowerment provided they take place in a supportive environment. An educated and skilled workforce is one of the pillars of the knowledge – based economy. Increasingly, comparative advantages among nations come less from natural resources or cheap labour and more from technical innovations and the competitive use of knowledge. Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth.

Basic literacy is one of the most powerful instruments societies have for reducing deprivation and vulnerability. It helps lift earnings potential and expands labour mobility. A more educated society may translate into higher rates of innovation, higher overall productivity through firm's ability to introduce new and better production methods, and foster introduction of new technology. Basic education has an important relation with the culture. This relation is of two modes: firstly, it influences the culture. This is helpful in bringing the cultural change and preservation of the present cultural norms and value. It is a tool for creating the political awareness among the masses. It helps them to understand the nature of government in their country and ways for effective communication with it for the solution of their problems. It possesses the empowering potential that can be translated into the increased political awareness and participation which in turn contributes to the quality of public policies and the democracy.

In order to effectively achieve a functional basic education for all, the following recommendations are made: The UBE Act should be clearly defined to stakeholders most especially to parents on key roles they can play towards enforcing child's education.

- 1) The learning environment should be enriched and made child – friendly for both pupils and teachers.
- 2) The government should employ more competent hands to undertake UBE programme, thus meeting with the enrolment figures.
- 3) Appropriate facilities, furniture should be adequately provided so as to meet – up with the teeming population.
- 4) Better packages, incentives, fringe benefits should be expended to teachers as obtained in other professions.
- 5) Proper statistical data should be put- in- placed in order to deter inefficiency in the work force.
- 6) Capacity building in the area of Information Communication Technology, workshops, conferences, symposiums etc.

- 7) There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of staff development so as to arouse quality control and assurance in education leading to sets standards.
- 8) There should be sensitization, public enlightenment and campaign for full community participation.
- 9) Training and retraining of teachers through in-service in tune with new delivery strategy that would fast-track basic education in Nigeria.
- 10) Establishment of mobile libraries duly equipped with modern reading texts and literatures, networking all over the country.
- 11) Considering the fact that education is an expensive enterprise, stakeholders (International Development Partners-IDP) should continue to usher – in their best towards ensuring lofty educational programmes.
- 12) The Law Enforcement Agencies and Judiciary should come together towards enforcing the implementation of the UBE Act and other related matters.
- 13) The Language of the Environment should be put to use as a medium of instruction at the Lower and Middle level of basic education.

Conclusion

Having gone through the topic “problems and prospects of the nine – year basic education: implications for national development”, one would agree that the dawn of the programme has universalized basic education with great intents and capacity. Equally, the full-fledged readiness for planning must be the one that will heavily rely on both insight and foresight. All hands should be on deck to see that basic education remained the sole responsibility of all and sundry. Our teacher training institutions especially Colleges of Education should be adequately equipped, and provided with necessary financial resources by the government in its direction so as to meet the challenges of the scheme. Nigeria can only be on the steady path towards achieving its vision 20-2020 aspirations if there is a synergy between the government

and stakeholders at home and abroad, bearing in mind their key roles in national development.

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