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The Implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT
This study is concerned with the implementation of basic education in Nigeria by given more attention the challenges and prospects**.** The study also provides a conceptual framework on basic education, its nature and objectives. It identifies some of the effective implementation strategies of basic education by Nigerian government at all level, and look at the numerous challenges of basic education in the country which include inadequate provision of funds, misappropriation of the available funds, nepotism, inadequate qualified, trained personnel and corruption, etc. In fact, the methodology used in this study was systematic review of related literature and observation from the experience as teacher educators. The problem of this study is to provide empirical evidences concerning the subject of discussion as the study deals with the implication, challenges and prospects of basic education in Nigeria. This is because many scholars and researchers construct many works on the field of study, but this study developed to reconstruct a philosophical work for the future researchers and policy makers as well as non-governmental organization. Finally, based on the identified challenges, some suggestions were provided; there should be continuous increase in the intervention funds from the Federal government, funds from the State and Local governments to the basic education programme in Nigeria, immediate scrutiny, correction and timely adjustment starting from grass roots to the top affairs in the basic education programme, adequate training of recruited teachers, establishment of effective laid-down rules and laws (regulation) to curb corruption practices, negligence and unwholesome practices for effective implementation of basic education in Nigeria.
Keywords: Basic education, Universal Basic Education, education programme, government support, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the most powerful instruments for the development of individuals and transformation of the society at large. In support of this statement, one of the former United Nation (UN)'s President Koffi Annan was reported to have said, "Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the corner stones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development" (**Onyebamiji, 2018**). In Nigeria for instance, no one can deny the fact that, basic education is the foundation of education upon which all other subsequent levels of education are built upon it. With the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the civilian Government of President Olusegun Obasanjo was confronted with certain serious educational realities, which demanded drastic measures in order to ameliorate the situation. Decay in all aspects of the educational sectors was evident. Consequently, the rate of illiteracy was high, the condition of the infrastructure was deplorable, teachers were poorly trained and not motivated, school drop-outs were increasing at an alarming rate while funding of the basic education in particular continued to be poor across the communities of the country (**Tahir, 2006**).

In addition, a major fundamental inhibiting factor to successful implementation of the Universal Basic Education and basic education in particular has been poor financing leading to inability for government to provide all facilities needed in the basic education schools. Inadequate and dilapidating facilities remain one major challenge to basic education schools across the country. Funding of basic education is not given the right priority in spite of UNESCO recommendations and the urgency to improve the sector. In contemporary times, various researchers and scholars have decried the deplorable conditions of facilities in the basic education institutions around the country (**Yanware, 2016**). There are other major problems in respect to implementation of basic education programmes in the nation. Some of which are lack of political will, lack of adequate data, inadequate planning, poor quantity and quality of inputs, inadequate funding and poor management. Most of these problems emanate from the government in all levels.

Conceptual framework on Basic Education in Nigeria

It is a well-known fact that basic education is crucial to the overall development of any individual, community or nation in general. It is not just an instrument for enhancing the life chances of individuals but lays the foundation for transforming the social and economic life of a nation. As such, the need for the eradication of illiteracy, promotion of functional education, reduction of poverty, attainment of an enlightened, economically viable and democratic society is heavily dependent upon an appropriate basic education system for their realization. Basic education, according to **Federal Ministry of Education Mini Summit (1999)** is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy. In the Nigerian context, basic education includes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCDE**)**, primary, junior secondary, nomadic education, almajiri system and adult literacy. In a related development, the revised **FRN/NPE (2013)** edition, defined basic education as the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Childhood Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling, Early Childhood Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector.

In view of the above, by nature basic education comprises of ECCDE for children 0-5+ years, nine (9) years free and compulsory formal schooling which comprise six (6) years of primary school and three (3) years of junior secondary school education, adult and non-formal education as well as nomadic education with aim of equipping Nigerian citizens with basic literacy and numeracy skills so as to ensure a lifelong learning. On the other hand, the goals of basic education are to:

i. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement;
ii. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;
iii. Inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour;
iv. Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, ethnic and socio-economic background; and
v. Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity (**FRN/NPE, 2013**).

Similarly, for the purpose of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government of Nigeria established Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme (**in the year 1999**) which served as a reform measure aimed at addressing inequality in the educational opportunity at the basic level and improving the quality of its provision. Specifically, the programme was introduced by the Federal Government in order to remove all sorts of distortions and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and to reinforce the implementation of the national policy on education as well as to ensure greater access, equity and quality of basic education throughout the country (**Tahir, 2006**). Moreover, UBE in the context of the law, has been broadly defined to include, early childhood care and education, the nine (9) years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as

nomads and migrants, girl-child and women, almajirai, street children and also disabled groups (**UBE ACT, 2004**).

Effective Implementation Strategies of Basic Education in Nigeria

The implementation strategies of basic education entails assessment of our options in order to set a general direction toward achieving the general objectives of the UBE programme and basic education in particular. In this regard, basic education effective implementation strategies include the provision of adequate training, recruitment and motivation of teachers, adequate funding and infrastructural facilities for the smooth and successful execution of the programme. It is important to note that, as part of the basic education implementation strategies, there are also encouragement and stimulation of the active participation of the private sector, non-governmental and voluntary organizations as well as local communities in the programme by establishment of working partnership and collaboration with the international communities and donor agencies; and provision of regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme (**FME, 1999**). On the other hand, according to the **Federal Ministry of Education (2000**), the following are the strategies for effective implementation of the UBE programme, basic education inclusive and they include:

i. Enactment of necessary legislation; thus, UBE act 2004 was an evidence to that effect;
ii. Articulation of enabling policies;
iii. Sensitization and mobilization of the target groups and all stakeholders;
iv. Adequate funding;
v. Adequate teacher training, recruitment and motivation;
vi. Encouragement and stimulation of the active participation of the private sector, non-governmental organizations as well as local communities in the programme; and
vii. Regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

It should be noted that for the programme to be successful, **Oduwaiye, (2002**) stated that the community has to fully participate in creating awareness to every member of the community and ensure the support of every one. As it has always been said "Education For All (EFA) is the responsibility of All." As specified, it is the community that will supply the human resources in terms of the required number of teachers and the pupils that will be needed for enrollment in different communities. Additionally, international communities are not left behind in the implementation of the UBE programme.

Challenges in the Implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria

There is no doubt about the fact that, basic education remains the foundation of education upon which other subsequent levels of education are built. As such, despite all the efforts the three tiers of governments are making with a view to ensuring effective implementation of basic education across the country, so that Nigerian children obtain basic literacy, numeracy and communication skills as well as acquisition of both vocational and academic skills for sustainable lifelong learning; However, with various events and happenings in Nigeria, the basic education is facing challenges that stand against fulfilling its goals and objectives. These challenges as identified by various researchers and are examined below:

i. **In adequate provision of Funds:** The Act made provision of the three sources of funding which are the federal, state and local governments. The federal government decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2% of its consolidated revenue fund; funds from local or international donor grant. However, it's quite alarming. As it has been discovered that the fund provided by each tier in their budget is not enough and this has constituted one of the great challenges for effective implementation of basic education in Nigeria.
ii. **Misappropriation of available Funds:** It saddens the heart for most of the available funds meant for the implementation of basic education are being embezzled and squandered. What would be the fate of the school children i.e. beneficiaries of the basic education are made to take their school lessons on bare floor and with faded black board in this present age. Does that not indicate that most available funds declared are being misappropriated and are not effectively utilized?
iii. **Corruption:** This has been seen as the order of the day and serve as a great barrier to the progress of the UBE programme and basic education in particular in Nigeria. Corrupt officials who handle the responsibility of apportioning funds to the right quarters will however divert the public funds and

grants for private use. As such, funds meant for the education of millions of children are being diverted for the acquisition of private property. Corruption is gradually becoming a norm which must be curbed immediately.

iv. **Nepotism:** This problem has become deep in public offices in Nigeria. Indeed, it has affected the UBE recruitment, SUBEB recruitment and even recruitment at LGEA level in Nigeria. Many officials and teachers are being employed based on the advantages of having someone who is in the position of power at that particular level. In fact, this has made some officials and teachers work below expectation due to the familiarity and ties which in turn delays the progress and achievement of the UBE programme and Basic education goals and objectives. The officials might either be in-experienced or far-off the required qualifications and in some cases, the teachers employed are not qualified and suitable for the job.

v. **Inadequate qualified and trained personnel:** Lack of qualified and trained personnel is another challenge to the basic education in Nigeria. Unfortunately, many unemployed people seeking to work with Basic Education level lacks the expertise and requirement needed at that level. This has made the implementation of the UBE programme and Basic Education across the Country slow. As such, when an untrained personnel i.e. teachers and supervisors for that matter are eventually employed to undertake duties meant for a qualified personnel, there will certainly be a drastic drop in the progress and achievement of the programme's objectives (**Oyebanji, 2018)**.

vi. **Inadequate Supervision/Inspection and Monitoring:** Ineffective and insufficient supervision, inspection and monitoring of the entire activities of basic education has led to the poor implementation of the programme in some states and local governments across the country. Thus, the capacity building workshops usually organized by SUBEB in collaboration with development partners e.g. UNICEF to update the knowledge of teachers for effective delivery, from the observation it was discovered that there was no proper follow up to ensure the effective implementation of what the teachers learnt are put into practice.

vii. **Poor and substandard construction of classroom blocks:** Generally, there is clear evidence of poor and substandard construction of classroom blocks in almost all the schools. Most of the schools are at various degrees of dilapidation, while others have become abandoned project.

viii. **Lack of Motivation of Teachers:** Motivation is regarded as an important aspect that enables individual to develop interest and enthusiasm toward their work. When the aspect of motivation among teachers is emphasized upon, then terms such as commitment, satisfaction, morale, promotion as at when due and attitudes are taken into consideration. In contrast to factors such as absenteeism, misconduct, lukewarm attitudes and attrition are reflections of low motivation (**Garba, 2021**), etc.

However, based on the review of related literature and the identified challenges of basic education in Nigeria, the following are some of the Prospects of effective implementation of basic education in Nigeria:

i. If there is continuous increase in the intervention funds from the Federal government, funds from the State and Local government to the basic education level in Nigeria. This will enhance the rapid and progress of the programme.

ii. Adequate training of recruited personnel and conduct training for intending employees this will certainly help to avoid lapses in the effective implementation of basic education in Nigeria;

iii. Constant inspection/supervision and monitoring as well as evaluation the entire affairs of basic education. This will no doubt help to determine the progress of the programme.

iv. If teachers are adequately motivated, i.e. apart from regular payment of salary, promotion as at when due and provision of other allowances to the teachers at the basic education level, there is no doubt of the fact that, these will make teachers to put in their best in discharging their responsibilities etc.

With these few mentioned ideas, basic education in Nigeria will have lasting foundation and impact in every Nigerian child and these will certainly help in the effective implementation of basic education across the country.

CONCLUSION

The importance of basic education as the foundation of the whole education system upon which other levels are built upon cannot be over emphasized and with this therefore, basic education requires effective implementation strategies that will help to achieve its goals and objectives. As such, well-designed strategies devoid of any challenge or obstacle for its effective implementation should be vigorously pursued. In essence, any systematic and meaningful progress in basic education is expected to be reflected into the products and the subsequent level of education across the Nigerian nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the identified Challenges for effective implementation strategies of basic education, the following suggestions are provided.

i. Government i.e. both the three tiers of governments should redouble their efforts in the continuous increase in the intervention funds to basic education in the country;
ii. overnment, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and philanthropist organizations should not relent in their efforts in partnership and collaboration in the provision of infrastructural and learning facilities to the basic education level;
iii. There should be adequate supervision/inspection as well as monitoring and evaluation of the entire basic education affairs across the country;
iv. There should be adequate provision of qualified and trained teachers for effective implementation of basic education in Nigeria;
v. Motivation and incentives should be accorded to the teachers who are the most important factors in the successful implementation of basic education in Nigeria, etc.

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