Universal Basic Education Scheme and the Development of Technology Education in Nigeria: The Current Challenges

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Abstract
The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria is a free, compulsory and universal education programme that starts from the primary education. The primary education forms the foundation of the whole educational pursuit, including technology education. This paper is premised on UBE scheme in Nigeria and the development of technology education in the country. It highlights some of the current challenges of UBE as a foundation for technology education development in the country. Implications are drawn for EFA programme in contemporary Nigeria Society.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Development, Technology Education, Challenges, Contemporary Society.

Introduction
Education in Nigeria as a developing nation deserves the attention and efforts of all and sundry for the eradication of illiteracy in the country. Education is the process through which ignorance is eliminated, skills for productivity and leadership are acquired and it is the key to future technological development the world over.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the foundation for sustainable socio-economic and technological development which requires the support of all for meaningful results. A firm technological development through basic education programme is expected to usher in all-round development in Nigeria. This is rightly captured by UBE motto, “Education for All is the Responsibility of All”. The federal, state and local governments, all arms of government, local communities, voluntary agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the international community and donor agencies, parents and individuals, all have a responsibility in achieving the goals of the UBE scheme in Nigeria (Ogwuche and Rabah, 2001).
The noble endeavor of the execution of UBE was conceived and launched in Nigeria on the 30th of September, 1999 in Sokoto state. The UBE as the foundation in training the young, provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It also considers a variety of formal programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy in science and technology. UBE as an instrument of social change in the society, has impacted positively on the lives of Nigerians. If the UBE programme must be sustained and made to achieve its laudable goals, all hands must be on deck to support the scheme financially, materially and otherwise.

**Conceptual Clarification**

Some concepts are better understood when they are operationally explained as they are used in the work. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was introduced in Nigeria as a programme of the federal government to provide free and compulsory education for all her citizens by the year 2015. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004), Section 3 stipulates that, “basic education shall be of 9-years period comprising 6-years of primary education and 3-years of junior education programme”. UBE is set to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy so as to promote education at the grassroot in Nigeria.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is not only concerned with the young children, but also adolescent and adults who either in one way or the other, could not attend formal school early in life. To Ihebereme and Maduewesi (2007), Universal Basic Education is the most important solution in the chain of efforts to make every Nigerian citizens literate. This insinuates that the status and quality of life for all Nigerians will be more enhanced with exposure to education early in life. In Nigerian context, basic education involves primary, junior secondary and nomadic education as well as Adult literacy. The UBE has three main components-Universal, Basic and Education. Universal connotes that the scheme is for everyone, irrespective of age, tribe, culture and class. Basic means it is fundamental and compulsory, hence without it, no meaningful education can be achieved. Education is essential to human development and Nigerians recognize it as a fundamental human right. Education is also an instrument for empowering people and the best legacy any nation can bequeath to its citizens.

Technology is the practical application of knowledge of science to achieve some results. The specific objective of technology education is to enable pupils observe and explore their environment meaningfully, using their hands. The learning of technology therefore involves the active participation of the learners, which UBE scheme is aimed at achieving (Agogo & Damkor-Ikpa, 2012). Technology education makes the learners appreciate everything around them, especially when they fully participate in the activities, thus the need to introduce technology education early in the academic life of the learners. Agogo and Achor (2014) think that the children early in their intellectual development should be meaningfully involved in the teaching-learning processes for better understanding.
Concept of Education

For education to be meaningful, it should take into account the learners’ experience, it is aimed at helping individual learner to develop his/her potentials and to live a fulfilled life in the society. Labo-popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009) see education as a relatively permanent change in ones behaviour as a result of learning. This consists of all conscious or accidental efforts made by a society to accomplish self-objectives. According to them, these set objectives are considered to be desirable in terms of the individual as well as the societal needs in Nigeria.

Education is the aggregate of all processes by which a child or the learner systematically learns to develop abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour for the good of the individual and the society. This means that education should be the responsibility of all, with everybody having access to it. This is because education helps to provide knowledge and skills to enable the beneficiaries improve on the quality of life they are taught and for the generality of the society. Everybody should therefore have access to functional and meaningful education in this 21st century Nigeria.

Okugbe (2009:184) opined that, “the incessant political changes in the past constituted one of the major problems of ineffective implementation of the policy statement of Education for All (EFA). This has led to failing standard of basic education and a sharp depreciation in the morals of primary school children, which brought about the introduction of the UBE programme (Agogo, Damkor-Ikpa & Ogbeba, 2012).

Objectives of UBE Scheme

The quality of any nation’s education is a product of its educational policies. So, the introduction of the UBE scheme, according to Okugbe (2009), is to make the scheme to be a world class regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education programme in Nigeria. The objectives of the UBE scheme according to Okugbe (2009) include;

i. Ensuring unfettered access to nine years of formal basic education

ii. The provision of free, universal and basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.

iii. Reducing the incidence of drop out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.

iv. To ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, among others.

These objectives can best be achieved if the scheme is properly planned and implemented. It would then be complete departure from the Universal Primary Education (UPE), which Utibe (2001) opined that it failed because it was improperly planned and hurriedly executed. UPE was introduced in Nigeria in 1976, but it failed because not enough preparing and planning was done, especially with respect to the number of teachers on ground.
Issues of Technology Education in Nigeria
Technology education addresses practical application of science knowledge that concerns creativity and hands-on activities. The products of these meaningful applications of science knowledge have economic, social, ethical and aesthetic values. In many homes today, there are many products in the local communities that needed the knowledge of technology. We have the grinding stone in the villages, clay pot moulding, thatched roofs in the homes, among many others. This means that the knowledge of science and technology can be applied at home, however crude, to bring out certain usable products. By implication, technology education helps the learners to be able to apply scientific knowledge to advance course of development. This means that, technology education encourages critical thinking. This is why the introduction of UBE scheme at the basic education level with science and technology subject, has become very relevant and important, in Nigeria education system today.

The (FRN, 2004) emphasized that technology education is expected to give training and impact the necessary skills for the production and technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who may be enterprising and self-reliant and to train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man (Agu, 2014). Agu further informed that when less value is placed on anything, it will rank low on the scale of preference and consequently attract little investment. This is why it is very important to have introduced technology education early to the learners for better understanding, as it is expected to instil in them the desire to learn by doing. This is a major thrust in what constitutes technology.

Basic science and technology education is critical to technological breakthrough. As a result of this, education in science and technology remains an indispensable tool for scientific and technological development (Adejoh and Sambo, 2011). The UBE scheme, if it is properly implemented instils valuable scientific skills and discipline, which are skills that are required in the learning of technology education. The importance of science and technology education to the learners’ basic understanding of material science, to be intellectually active and to be mentally alert, form part of the reasons for introducing basic science and technology at the basic education level in Nigeria. To Adejoh and Sambo (2011), individuals who are literate in basic science and technology may have acquired the useful skills, knowledge and attitudes to transform the society scientifically and technologically.

Current Challenges of UBE Scheme in Nigeria
The main thrust of UBE scheme is that, every government in Nigeria is to provide free, compulsory and universal education for every Nigerian child of school age. This means that every child of school going age is to be in school, but not to roam the village paths or town streets, hawking for money for their parents or guardians. Every parent is expected to ensure that his child or ward attends and completes primary and junior secondary school education (Nwogu&Osai, 2002, Udida, 2010). Some of the challenges include;
Policy inconsistency
It should be stressed that, Nigerian education system and policies are characterized by a high level of planning uncertainties, which affects meaningful planning (Aluede, 2006). These also form the basis for the challenges of UBE scheme in Nigeria. Poor planning in many sectors of development in Nigeria, including education have failed even at time off. There is need for proper planning before execution.

Child Adjustment
The UBE scheme enables the child to cross his/her home boundaries to the school environment. Sometimes this requires cultural crossing. The process of the child’s transfer from home to school may be faced with what Okonkwo and Obineli (2013) call “adjustment problem”. This is a situation where a child learns to interact with people of other cultural backgrounds in a formal setting. Such children need follow up encouragement and guidance counselling problems to get adjusted to school programmes, if not, many such children have abandoned school when they encounter culture-related problems in the school.

Paucity of teachers
When UBE was introduced in 1976, apart from the poor data, there was the problem of paucity of qualified teachers for many classes that were hastily created due to population explosion (Agogo & Damkor-Ikpa, 2012). There was the need for merger of classes, which posed a challenge of over crowdedness. There is therefore the need for training of teachers in key subject areas to cope with the student population.

Poor Funding Policy
Nigeria annual budgetary allocation to education is always poor, because it is usually below UNESCO’s threshold of 26% of the total yearly budget (Okugbe, 2009). According to Okugbe (2009), financial burden of government often forces parents to get involved in the funding of the UBE programme. This means that it is not totally a free education. The adverse effects of under-funding, especially in Delta and other states like Benue, have led to payment of teachers’ salaries always in arrears. In the same way, many UBE infrastructural projects are left uncompleted for years due to lack of funds. This is why Utibe(2001) observed that even though huge annual budgets are announced for UBE programme, yet many schools are always plagued with inadequate physical facilities for effective implementation of the programme in many states of the federation.

Inadequate data provisions have led to poor infrastructural facilities, including classrooms, staff offices, school laboratories and studios. The physical structures that are available are found to be below standard and are even grossly inadequate. In many UBE schools, children learn under trees or sit on the bare floor where physical buildings are available.

Supervision and Monitoring
The poor or non-existent supervision and monitoring of UBE centers have implications for the scheme. For instance, Okugbe (2009) reported the constraints to effective supervision and
monitoring in Delta State UBE scheme as being attributed to inadequate vehicles for monitoring of the programme. Yet, many UBE vehicles are used for non-UBE programmes, to the detriment of the scheme in Delta state of Nigeria.

**Implication of UBE schemes for EFA Programme.**
The success and failure of the education system can be determined by the way UBE programme is handled. This is because the 1976 Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nigeria which was badly handled was a colossal failure, especially as it was poorly planned and executed. The implication of UBE scheme for EFA programme can be seen from the point of view of the high drop-out rate in primary school. According to Labo-popoola et al (2009), only about 60% of school age children are in school, while about 40% of them are somewhere either hawking wares, doing petty jobs or lost into the thick and busy Nigerian towns. According to Olarewaju and Folorunso cited in Labo-popoola et al (2009), drop-out rate for girls is 44% while for the boys is 39.3%.

Many states of the federation lock their schools perpetually due to incessant strike action by their teachers. This may be due to one problem or the order, especially on the welfare of the teachers (payment of salaries, allowances and others).

**Conclusion**
The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme was introduced by the federal government of Nigeria as a way of meeting the educational needs of the Nigerian people. Accordingly, Bature and Oluwole (2014) opined that the UBE scheme is an attempt to meet the national objectives for social equality, mobility and manpower needed for national development. However many of Nigeria’s educational programmes failed in the past due to lack of careful planning by the government. With collaborative approach to UBE scheme by various stakeholders in education in Nigeria, it may not fail. This will enable Nigeria to achieve Education for All by the year 2015, barring these current challenges in UBE scheme in Nigeria as identified.

**References**

