

## A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental human right that should be accorded to all human being. Due to the importance of education in all parts of human development, government at both federal, state and local government level had made a concerted effort in view of the government commitment to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development. This paper examines sociological perspective of the universal basic education (UBE) in Bayelsa State. The main objectives of this paper was to examine and identify the problem of UBE.. The study revealed that most UBE schools lak trained teachers, infrastructural facilities, instructional materials and funds. While, Inadequate teaching and learning facilities, poor motivation for teachers and instability in government policies, lack of political will, lack of planning were factors observed as the major constraints and challenges of UBE. Based on the above; it was recommended among others that government should ensure proper utilization of the allocated budget.

**Keywords:** Education, Sociological Perspective, Universal Basic Education

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### INTRODUCTION

Universal Basic Education Programme is a people's programme. The Federal Government is essentially the initiator and guide to the prosecution of the programme. Realizing the problem of education at the basic level, the Federal Government came up with a clear policy to expanding access to education to all Nigerians and restoring the system to its past glory.

The crucial sociological role of education in the social-political and economic development of any country cannot be over emphasized. that it is only when the citizenry are well educated that the attainment of rapid national development can be achieved. Conscious of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted it as an instrument per excellence for effective national development.

Pressure from social change and exploring opportunities for improved education in addition to the need to make use of research findings geared towards improved teaching and learning have necessitated these changes. Most of the policies relating to education have been modified, transformed or even totally abolished. The aim is geared towards improving the standard of education and achieving society development. This change is an inevitable phenomenon in life and whether it comes as a result of pressure or the need for it, should not be a problem to people in educational management. This is because intervention in to the fabric of the great African experiment in universal education is the foundational concept that any system

designed, no matter how good the system was at its inception and despite the excellence of its current products improvements can be made and excellence can be attained. The compulsory free Universal Basic Education is an education experiment and venture in Nigeria which is in line with contemporary development in the world.

It is a laudable initiative geared, towards globalization 'education for all' beginning at the foundation levels. The UBE scheme through its egalitarian philosophy seeks to liberate education opportunities for all, compulsory and free to ensure access and equity irrespective of ethnic background, gender, religion as well as political economic and social position. The Federal Government of Nigeria has not only given a consent to, but has accepted the united nations conventions on the right of the child, especially articles 28 of the charter (FGN/UNTCEF, 1993 and UNICEF, 1991 which states that States parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this might progressively and on the basis of equal opportunities, shall in particular.

1. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all.
2. Encourage the development including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child is to take appropriate measure such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case need, and
3. Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates. According to Nwafor in Maduawa (2006) "for the UBE to achieve the objectives of waste reduction, through qualitative instruction'. Unfortunately, in spite of all the past huge Government inputs and curricular innovative efforts, the menace of poor academic performance still remains apparently insurmountable.

This means that the challenge of qualitative education must be tackle head-on as we plunge into implementing the UBE scheme quality education which is the critical education factors like methods and materials, environment, curriculum other similar resources variables (Bassey 2002) and Falajojo, 1996). This implies that the education compartments which the new Programme must address include physical expansion, elimination of waste in as well as teaching effectiveness (Nwafor in Maduawa, 2006).

Another dimension of the universal Basic Education in Nigeria is the extension of the Programme to the Junior Secondary School level. Nigeria operates 6-3-3-4 system of education which involves a primary school period of six years divided into three years of junior and three years of senior secondary school and four years period of university education. Furthermore, education specifically free primary section for all children is a fundamental right to which Government committed themselves under the 1989 convention of the right of the child. UNICEF advocates quality basic education for all with an emphasis on gender equality and eliminating disparities of all kinds. In particular getting girls into school and ensuring that they stay and learn effectively. Educated girls are likely to marry later and have fewer children who will be more able to participate in social economic and political decision making in the society.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria was flagged off on the 30th of September, 1999 by Chief Obasanjo to provide a free and compulsory education for all children of school age in order to reduce the level of illiteracy and underdevelopment in the country. The programme was a laudable one which gave access to the children for the improvement of quality education.

However, the expectations of this programme aimed at equipping Nigerian children with the requirement for a successful life in the future is not yet achieved as the products of the programme do not have the necessary skills required to meet life challenges due to some flaws in the management of the programme. It is on this stand that the paper sought to investigate the sociological perspective of UBE in Bayelsa State.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main aims/objectives of the study is to examine the sociological perspective of the UBE programme in Bayelsa State.

It specifically seeks to:

1. Identify the problem of UBE programme.
2. To find out strategies for the implementation of UBE programme.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study gave general approach in sociological perspective in the implementation of the UBE, especially at the primary and junior secondary school level.

This study would help in revitalizing the education system in the state, and also aid full implementation of the UBE in the state. The study will play a significance role on the implementers or stakeholders of UBE on the infrastructure, finance, material and human needs to the actual attainment of UBE in Bayelsa State. {Recast} What is UBE?

The Universal Basic Education Programme is "in fact part of Nigeria's efforts to uphold and renew its commitment to the provision and promotion of basic education for all as required by a number of covenants and protocols to which Nigeria is a signatory" (UBE, 2006). These covenant and protocol emerged from the 19 words and 6 Africa specific conferences/congresses/summits that were held in the decade of decade of summits (1990-1999).

The Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN (1999) quotes the Jomtien declaration and frame work of action on Education, 1999 that:

Basic education is not defined in terms of years of schooling. Neither is it limited to formal schooling. It sees education in its broadest sense as of a close articulation of the formal, the non-formal and informal approaches to and structures for the awakening and all-round development of the human potential. The broad aim is to lay the foundation of life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning to learn, self awareness and life skills.

According to UBE (2002) the objectives of the UBE Programme includes:

- Developing in the citizens a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion,
- The provision of free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- 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
- Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulating, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

**Consequently, the scope of the Programme includes the following:**

- Programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development.

- Programmes and initiative for the acquisition of functional literacy, numerical and life skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above),
- Special Programmes for nomadic populations,
- Out-of-school children, non-formal Programmes for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning.
- Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education,
- The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the junior secondary school (UBE, 2002).

From the above definition, objectives and scope of the UBE Programme, it means that it encompasses formal, informal and non-formal aspects of education for children, adolescents and adults. It aims at not only making the young to acquire the skills of permanent literary, numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively, but also to acquire practical skills with which to earn a living for life. In fact the ultimate goal is to achieve 'education for all' -the advantaged, disadvantaged, gifted, uneducable, physically challenged, non-challenged, rural and urban dwellers; the rich, poor, nomadic and sedentary; etc.} These demand a lot of planning, preparations, partnerships between governments on one hand between government and the private sector on the other hand. 'Education For All is-the Business of All' The universal Basic Education Policy implementation.

The failure of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) did not determine the government of Nigeria from further exploring the means to enhance basic education. A numbers of events encouraged Nigeria to make converted efforts towards achieving basic education for all. One of such events was her involvements in the world conference on education for all held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. Conference agreed on the following point in respect of basic education.

- Basic Education should be available in various setting e.g at home, community, school, cultural and recreational centres, workplace and mass media and in everyday activities.
- Basic education for children, youths and adults as a right to have one's basic learning needs, and development of skills
- Various agents' family local community, state government, society, PTA's and market association should provide basic education.
- It should be made available through various means formal non-formal, self directed experimental learning, traditional and modern media and distance modalities.

The Jomtien conference recommended that every country of the world should determine its circumstances and design its basic education accordingly. This is because basic learning needs (BLN) are many, and changes overtime have to be updated according to realities (UNESCO, 2001). Furthermore, Nigerian also participated and adopted the Dakar education for all (EFA) goals and the sustainable development goals (SDGS) both of which took place 2000. These conferences tries to review the achievements made from conferences of basic education. The Dakar conference implored the nations of the world to work seriously on the pursuit of the following :

- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensure that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills Programmes.
- That by 2020 all children particularly girls, and children in difficult circumstance and those that belong to ethnic minorities have access to complete free and compulsory

- primary education of good quality.
- Attain 50% improvement in the levels of adult literacy 2020 especially women and equitable access to basic and continuing education.
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary education by 2020 and achieve gender equality in education by 2020 (UNESCO, 2001).

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UBE SCHEME

Okoroma (2007) {opined a} number of features make the implementation of the UBE of 1999 more challenging than that of 1976. some of the features include:

- UBE goes beyond primary education to the secondary level.
- UBE covers both formal and less formal forms of education which includes literacy and nomadic education.
- UBE emphasizes early childhood care and development.
- UBE is not only about access to basic education it emphasizes quality, efficiency and equity.
- UBE provide that opportunity to acquire basic education that will be available to everyone irrespective of locations, parental circumstances. The above features constitute some of the parameters among other in accessing the implementation of the UBE scheme after seven years of inception. Popoola (2003) applauded the Federal government for introducing the e UBE scheme. In his view;

The UBE scheme remains the most ambitious scheme of any government of the Federation access to basic education endanger a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time.

The objectives of the UBE are yet from being fully realized as a result of the usual implementation problems associated with most Nigeria policies. This culture of ineffective implementation of policies (educational or otherwise) worried a former governor of Rivers State of Nigeria and prompted him to observe thus;

We know, it is difficult to realize planned objectives one hundred percent. But our experience in education in this country shows a disturbing gap between planned objectives and attained results it is pertinent to identify whether those critical gap between policy and the realization of objectives are due to faulty planning or faulty implementation. (Oyakhilome 1986).

A preliminary study by Okoroma (2003) to assess the implementation of the UBE scheme after four years of its inception revealed great inadequacy in the implementation efforts. The study identified the following constrains as impeding the implementation of the UBE:

- Inadequate qualified teachers.
- Insufficient fund
- Inadequate teaching and learning facilities - Poor motivation for teachers; and Okwalanasa (2003) have noted that education in Nigeria including the UBE scheme has remained in a state of epilepsy. In support of the earlier findings of Oku (2003) has enumerated some of the implementation challenges of the UBE scheme to include;
- Instability in government polices
- Lack of political will
- Inadequate planning leading to wrong forecasts and projection
- Lack of commitment from people who should make the Programme work
- Poor funding of the scheme makes it impossible to achieve any meaning full results.
- Staff and facilities are inadequate in terms of quantity and quality

- Over concentration of implementation authority on the Federal government without sufficiently involving the state and local government.

#### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR UBE

The launching of the UBE scheme in September, 1999 has raised the hope of millions of Nigerians across the country. The expectations are high everybody is concerned about government's strategies for the achievement of the objectives of the scheme. In order to ensure a successful implementation of the UBE Programme, adequate planning should be carried out in the following areas:

1. Educational personnel: Personnel here include teaching and non-teaching staff, school administrators (head of units, educational supervisors/inspectors, school health officers and guidance counsellors, planning here involved determining the personnel needs in terms of member and the skills require now and in the near future. The skills require now and in the near future. Adequate planning should be done regarding the employment of competent and qualified teachers that would care for the increase in students/pupils at the ratio of 1 teacher to 40 pupils, the scheme would require minimum of 280, 000 teacher. This assumption is far from being realistic.
2. Facilities and equipment: efficient use of facilities increase in students/pupils enrolment, planning facilities and or provision of new ones. Such facilities include instructional materials, classroom and writing desk for pupils, text books etc.
3. Curriculum; the curriculum planning here will involve analyzing the present curriculum for primary and junior secondary school and non-formal education; reviewing them to be in line with aims and objectives of the UBE scheme. The curriculum needs to be expanded to include things like computer literary and communication skills.
4. Funding: Adequate planning should be carried out in the aspect of funding the UBE scheme.
5. Finance is absolutely a crucial input of any educational system. It provides the essentials purchasing power with which education procures human and materials resources (Akpon, 1999). Thus, with little or no fund educational objectives cannot be achieved.
6. Supervision/inspection and evaluation and their activities are control techniques to ensure that appropriate instructional methods and -materials are utilized in classroom teaching. The purpose is to make sure that quality and standard are maintained, effective planning is necessary in this direction. Effective supervision/inspection or data for plan evaluation and review (Adepoju, 2000).

#### AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR UBE

For a child to acquire the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative communicative and life skills according to (Eya and Neboh 2001) there is need to expose the child to appropriate instructional materials to which the child will and provide

to the children. Instructional materials are all terms of information carried that can be employed during teaching and learning process to bring about effective learning. According to Mkpa (1987) instructional materials include all the materials or resources which the teachers and the entire class utilize for the purpose of making teaching and learning more effective.

The Federal government in the implementation guide line for UBE lays great emphasis on the use of instructional material, when in section (7) seven, it states that there should be an encouragement to the provision of facilities for early childhood care specialization. This was an aspect of universality of the UBE Programme. That is why it is necessary to evaluate availability

of instructional materials in the primary and junior secondary schools where the UBE Programme will take off. The instructional materials that are needed to care for specific needs of the child and to lay a solid foundation are many and varied.

The universal basic education implementation guidelines (UBE, 2000) posit that: in view of the priority which the government of the federation places on UBE as the key genuine National development considerable financial resources will be mobilized for the execution. Onyejemezi (1999) observe that the decay which affected all the levels of the country's education is characterized by lack of concrete authoritative support and calls for:

- i. The replacement of obsolete resources and facilities.
- ii. Providing the infrastructural facilities necessary for the use of resources,
- iii. Matching the resources needs of schools with their peculiar circumstances including population of learners and teacher.

He further opines that in order to meet the needs of the anticipated high involvement of pupils into UBE Programmes, government should provide all facilities like classroom teaching aids, different kinds of laboratory equipment, materials for experiment and practical work, modern libraries and audio-visual centres to cater for the scheme.

#### HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES FOR UBE

There are substantial short comings in Nigeria instructional and personal capacities for the delivery of sound education for all citizen. The national policy on education accepts a teacher-pupils ratio of 1:40, although a ratio of 1:30 is envisaged "as target in the near future". Anikoeze (1996) admitted that teacher availability has to be looked into with increase in pupil's enrolment in schools. For the year 2000/2001 the additional number of pupils to be accommodated for the UBE primary one class has been projected to be in the region of 1-12 million. Assuming we have adequate teachers in the existing school, these pupils will still require a minimum of 280,000 teachers that is at the ratio of one teacher per 40 pupils (FME, 1999).

There is the need to plan for human resources, and such human resources must be quantitative to supplement the teaching process by the teacher. Nisfor (1999) example are pictures, charts, textbooks, chalkboards, sound; rays, old newspapers, new prints, pictures, cutting, Paper match, plasticine, radio cassette player and even the teacher etc. from the above, it can be deduced that the availability of physical resources is indispensable in the implementation of any education Programme. Thus Fadipe (1988) maintained that the successful implementation of plans require a number of factors which depend mainly on availability of required materials resources. Similarly, Okeke (1980) and Akangbou (1988) opined that lack of these essential resources had always Grippped educational plan implementation in Nigeria. Provision of basic infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, current books, charts, audio-visual material, medical care, computer, electricity etc. is the yard stick for measuring success processes or failure of teaching and learning processes. While material resources refers to those things that are requirement for the UBE scheme ranging from the very simple ones e.g. writing material, tables, chairs, desk to the most complex e.g. structures and building classrooms. Teachers will be required for the UBE scheme to be effective. Others structures include libraries, ; laboratories, workshops, multipurpose rooms, computers centres, studios among other moreover, additional teaching and learning facilities that will be required for the scheme include, audio-visual materials, textbooks, laboratory equipment, workshop equipment and

many others.

#### FUNDING OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION

From the report of understanding public financing of primary education in Nigeria (July, 15, 2000). Who is responsible for primary education in Nigeria? Under the constitution, federal and state government has concurrent responsibility for primary education. The federal government determines national policy, sets standards and monitor performance. State governments are responsible for designing, developing and delivering the services, examples include designing the curriculum and preparing legislation. In addition, local government have a formal responsibility, dating from the local government decree of 1976, for providing and maintain primary education, subjects to necessary assistance from the state (Federal Ministry of Education, Education Sector States Report Abuja, Nigeri, 2003).

#### WHO FUNDS PRIMARY EDUCATION?

All the three tiers of government federal, state and local government fund primary education in Nigeria.

##### **Federal and State Government**

Capital expenditure (building, books and furniture) come from the federal and state government's share of the federation account. The federation account holds all federally collected revenues; the funds are divided among the three tiers of government according to a formula determined by the national assembly. Some of the funds in this account accrue from government owned mineral resources a set percentage (14%) of which is returned to the states, apportioned on the basic of the state original contributions. These after, 15% of VAT revenues is distributed to the federal; government, 50% to state government and 35% to local government of the funds remaining within the federation account, 54.7% goes to the federal government, 24.7% to state government and 20.6% to local government. State government also pays the recurrent cost for managing State Primary Education Board (SUBEBS) Local Government Education (LGEAS) and primary schools.

##### **Local Government**

The local government 20.6% share of the federation account result in two types of local funding for education. First at the state level, a percentage of the local share (a first charge) is set aside for primary teachers salaries and allowance. Local government may then use a part of what remains for direct assistance to primary school. This also contributes its own Sources of primary education.

##### **The Universal Basic Education in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective.**

A close examination of the UBE shows that it is a noble programe by government especially when one considers its objectives. What more could a developing society like Nigeria desire in terms of education, that to have all school age children be in school. If one considers the fact that education is a veritable tool for advancing any nation, especially a developing one like Nigeria, then one can conclude that the UBE programme is worth executing since its aims is to empower future leaders educationally, for the purpose of advancing the country.

However, while we accept that the UBE programme is worth executing, especially going by its objectives and scope, it is also important to point out that there are some identified problems that should be tackled. This particular aspect of the current policy on education never took into consideration the current realities of Nigeria's socio-economic and already existing educational

conditions.

First, there is the problem of dearth of qualified teachers to adequately handle educational needs arising from the expansion of the previously existing educational structure. Most primary schools lack qualified teachers. Commenting on this Adenipekun (2006) pointed out that the problem of lack of teachers in primary schools affects 85% of the states in Nigeria (Vanguard Newspaper, Thursday, May 25th 2006). lack of qualified hands, how then can they adequately accommodate pupils of the junior secondary category who under the 9-3-4 system of the UBE policy would now become integral part of the primary school? The problem of lack of and unskilled teachers will affect pupils to the extent that they will pass out without being equipped with the required educational skills that match with their level of education. At the end of the objective of having completers of the Universal Basic Education to possess literacy and basic life skill will be defeated.

Studies have shown that adequate motivation is a precondition for the achievement of maximum output in any work environment, related to the problems of dearth of teachers is the issues of lack of motivation and incentives for teachers. Adepoju and Fabiyi (2007) report that in three demographic studies on the existing national situation in the primary education sector, results showed that almost all sampled teachers indicating they were poorly motivated. How can the goals of UBE be excellently achieved when teachers whose position are central to the achievement of such goals, are poorly motivated? Commenting on the state of teachers in Nigeria, Olor (2005) stressed that teaching profession in Nigeria is accorded low regard and often treated as dumping ground. Today Nigerian children hardly aspire to become teachers. This is obviously due to the nature of teachers motivation and remuneration in Nigeria especially Bayelsa State.

Another challenge the UBE programme is confronted with is the issue of inadequate facilities and infrastructures. A number of primary schools in Nigeria, especially Bayelsa State are characterized by limited resources, overcrowded classrooms and dilapidated buildings (Olor, 2005) it is not in dispute that in some primary schools, some pupils learn under trees. Three demographic studies on the existing national situation in the primary education sector revealed that 12% of primary school pupils sit on the floor, 30% of classrooms have no ceilings, 87% of classrooms are overcrowded, while 77% of pupils lack textbooks (Adepoju and Fabiyi, 2007). The crucial questions are, given such pitiable circumstances, can such primary schools adequately fulfill the goals of UBE? In reality, such schools would have a significant proportion of their pupils studying under harsh condition of sun, rain and other weather conditions. How much can teachers teach and how much can the pupils themselves learn under in the face off, sun, rain and similar environmental condition? If the teacher is unable to teach well and the pupil is unable to learn well, what quality of pupils will the UBE programme in Bayelsa State raise for the future? Achieving 100% success in ensuring that all school-age children are in school has been identified as one of the goals of UBE in Bayelsa State. The realization of these goals is however seriously challenged by the phenomenon of child labour. A good number of Nigerian children especially Bayelsa State are trapped in child labour. Particularly the type described in Charles, Ikoh, Iyamba, and Charles (2006) as house helpship or domestic labour. As a result of poverty, a number of parents as Oloko (1990) revealed, send their children to either serve as domestic help i.e house help/domestic servants or hawkers, just to supplement family income. Charles et al (2006) even stressed that more parents have been involved in engaging

children in child labour because of the high pay it yields to them. For the children caught up in child labour, what hope is there that they will acquire basic education? especially in Bayelsa state.

Corruption is another monster that challenges the UBE programme, particularly in Bayelsa state. A number of public office holders in Bayelsa State are more minded about amassing wealth to themselves than painstakingly doing their jobs. Government has taken giant strides in certain key areas of the educational system, including, the UBE programme, however, a lot of mismanagement is observed especially in the area of funds allocated to the programme. The problem of general corruption poses a major threat to the present educational policy and must be decisively dealt with if the UBE programme must yield dividends in Bayelsa State.

### **CONCLUSION**

For education to be meaningful, it must be qualitative. Qualitative education is that which is relevant and adapted to the vast changing needs of the community. Therefore, haphazard's planning and implementation of our educational policies not based on functional research at the primary level will have no other effect than total collapse of the entire educational system. The findings made by this work will enable the government to revisit the allocation formula by increasing the amount of money and materials made available for proper implementation of UBE programme. Certainly, the paper has shown that there is a yearning gap between what is happening and what ought to happen. The implication being that the available facilities and manpower cannot support the UBE Programmes implementation in Bayelsa State.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Funding of UBE programme is inadequate, therefore government should increase the budgetary allocation and ensure proper utilization and monitoring in the state.
- 2) That government should intensify efforts at rehabilitating school infrastructures and also ensure that more of such infrastructural facilities are put in place to promote healthy academic performance in the State.
- 3) Human and material. resources are not enough, therefore manpower should be increased and training given, for improved productivity in the State.
- 4) Educational Programmes should be given adequate planning process. Experts should be involved in Planning educational Programmes in order to avoid flaws and failures in the State.
- 5) That for the educational goals to be met stakeholders should address both human and material resources, buildings, books, teachers, etc. and the organic requirements of ensuring a complete and quality primary education in the State.

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