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A Comparative Analysis of the Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE) and the Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) Scheme in Nigeria: Matters Arising

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Abstract

The authors discussed the Universal Primary Education Scheme and the Universal Basic Education scheme in Nigeria and matters arising that limited the programmes from accomplishing the main objectives for which they were launched. Both the UPE and the UBE programmes were educational programmes launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1976 and in 1999 respectively, with the main aim of amongst others, making primary education free and compulsory increasing primary school enrolment, eliminating illiteracy in Nigeria, balance educational disparity within various regions, increase numeracy amongst Nigerians, to encourage national unity and integration in Nigeria, encourage sustainable development in Nigeria, encourage life-long learning especially for out of school persons on reasons of age and other socio-cultural barriers amongst others in Nigeria. Though the two programmes were launched at different time in Nigeria with similar objectives-Education For All. However, the authors observed that both programmes suffered the same fate, right from the conception of the programmes to the execution. The major set -backs to the programmes were : poor planning, poor preparation, poor infrastructures, lack of adequate and qualified personnel to prosecute the programmes to successful ends, paucity of fund, lack of discipline amongst the executors of the programme, improper supervision, monitoring and evaluation, lackadaisical attitude of school teachers, employment are sometimes based on political affiliation and not based on merit etc. Based on the observed inherent challenges, the authors conclude and recommended that proper planning, employment based on merit, proper supervision, monitoring and evaluation among others should be the watchword of any government educational programme of such magnitude. The authors are hopeful that since many other developed countries in Europe, Asia and America have attained great strides in their national economy through their educational policies, Nigeria too can attain same if things are done properly and "squire pegs put in squire holes.

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Introduction

The Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE, 1976)

The Universal Primary Education Scheme was an educational ideal by the military regime targeted at balancing educational disparity in the post war Nigeria and to encourage national unity and development in Nigeria. The Universal Primary Education Scheme was first launched in Nigeria in the 1950s by the Western and the Eastern Regions in 1955 and 1957 respectively. However, (Ukeje, 1992) ^[19] observed that free and compulsory education at primary, secondary and higher levels had earlier on been advocated in 1961 at the UNESCO conference on African education. Adis, Ababa, Ethiopia and in 1962, at Tananarive, Madagascar.

In January 1974, the then Nigerian military Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon announced the intention of the federal government to embark on a Universal Primary Education (UPE), on a national scale. However, the initial take off of the programme was on the 6th, of September, 1976 when Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo as the new head of state, Formally launched the programme at Okeano primary school Lagos. (Taiwo, 1988) ^[17] posited that from that day elementary school was

to be free and all inclusive all through the entire nation, while it was to be mandatory in 1979. Primary school was to be six years duration. It will be recalled that one of the reason for the UPE scheme was to improve the overall school enrolment in the country and also to correct the dangers occasioned by regional educational disparity between one part of the country and another which constitute a bane to national stability, unity and development.

Another reason for the UPE scheme was to provide the numbers of manpower required for full utilization for national development and national unity. (Taiwo, 1988) ^[17], further maintained that the UPE scheme was an awesome commitment to instructive improvement in Africa and of monstrous advantage to Nigeria in preparing its human resources and accommodating the Nigeria youngsters rise to have access to training for national development. This is in support of the assertion of (Lockheed, 1984), when he opined that if a nation must develop, it must mobilize and utilize its human resources to make their impute to national development and this must start with mass enrolment at the elementary school stage. It is pertinent to observe that most of the heads of government institution, politicians, head of services, principals, lecturers, medical Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers etcetera who have made serious impact and are still making impact in their various field in the development and stability of the socio-political system of Nigeria today are products of the UPE scheme, (Udoh, 2012) ^[18]. Were it not for the UPE programme majority of these persons today would have remained behind the iron curtain of illiteracy and their contributions to the development of Nigeria lost when it would have been needed most.

However, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme with its lofty objective of eliminating/reducing regional educational disparity in Nigeria suffered a major setback from its inception which invariably affected the actualization of the desired objective. One of the factor that negatively affected the UPE scheme was poor planning. Due to poor planning the agents of the government responsible for the implementation of the scheme could not effectively forecast the expected number of pupils for enrolment as to make adequate provisions to accommodate the upsurge in the enrolment of pupil which was more than the expected figure. This single pitfall was a major setback for the UPE scheme actualizing its desired objective from inception.

Another problem of the scheme was poor financing. Given the fact that the number on enrolment at the inception of the programmed was far more than the number expected, the government could not muzzle the huge financial demand associated with the number of pupil on enrolment. Poor financing leading to poor infrastructural provision was another challenge of the UPE scheme from actualizing its objective. Besides, due to the mass enrolment of pupils, the demand for teachers to meet up with teacher- students ratio became another problem. To meet up this challenge there was mass recruitment of teachers from within and outside Nigeria, Africa, Asia, India and Europe. The qualification and competence of most of the teachers employed begged a lot of questions. Consequently qualitative education was sacrificed at the altar of quantity –mass literacy. It was observed that most of the advocates of the UPE scheme preferred fee-paying schools for their children to the free government UPE scheme because of their lack of faith in the programme at producing standard and quality graduates of the programme. Thus, in attempt to solve the problem of educational

disparity, fallen standard of education became the order of the day with high incidence of examination malpractice that is still been battled with till today. One doubts whether the inter-regional education gap the UPE programme was intended to bridge has actually been closed or was the gap widened due to the myriads of flaws that attended the programme from its inception. (Adesina, 1988) ^[2], maintained that one major challenge to the UPE programme was that it lacked the ideological and philosophical commitment that was to translate the objective of the scheme to reality and so was seen as a mere political propaganda.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme

The Universal Basic Education scheme in Nigeria was a response to the Jomtien Thailand conference and declaration of 1990, on the promotion of Basic education for all (EFA), the New Delhi 1991, declaration to reduce illiteracy and the Durban 2006, declaration requiring member nations to sufficiently offer access to quality essential training as an establishment stone for national advancement (Amaele, 2011) ^[3]. The program was launched in Nigeria in 1999 under the regime on Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; for the purpose of giving Nigerians opportunity to receive the Basic education for a life- long learning that will facilitate sustainable national development. The UBE scheme is a nine year program of six year of primary and a three year of junior secondary school to contribute to national development through education.

Among others, the UBE is aimed at the arrangement of free, Universal Basic Education for each Nigerian offspring of school age, to definitely diminish the rate of drop-out from the formal educational system. The destinations additionally guarantees the securing of fitting levels of education, numeracy, manipulative informative and fundamental abilities and in addition the values needed for laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning. In response, the individual will be able to live a fulfilled life and discharge their civic duties completely (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2012) ^[15].

Dike (1989) posited that at the Jomtien conference of 1990, all the countries in attendance pledged to:

1. Provide compulsory and free relevant primary education for all
2. Massively reduce adult illiteracy.

This pledge was based on the consensus among nations that:

1. Education facilitates development
2. Education empowers citizens to harness resources in their environment or improve quality of life.
3. Education is necessary to make progress in such areas as health and population.

(Okorosaye-Orubite, 2012) ^[15], also maintains that the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria is part of Her effort to maintain and recharge its responsibility regarding the arrangement and advancement of fundamental training for all as required by various contracts and conventions to which Nigeria is a signatory which rose up out of the 19 World and 6 Africa particular meetings and summits in the decades of summits 1990-1999. The above ideals informed Nigerian commitment to basic education. Each country was to domesticate the policy of UBE base on the local need and culture of the people. Before now as earlier stated, there had been the Universal Primary Education (UPE) schemes of the nineteen fifties in the Western and Eastern Regions and that of the 1976 UPE launched at the national level by the then

Military regime of Chief Olosegun Obasanjo aimed at mass literacy for all in Nigeria.

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of the 1976 was left with much than was to be desired. This was because the mistake of the 1950's that crumbled the UPE scheme in the Regions was not avoided. (Ogeh, 2015) ^[14] maintains that one of the reasons why the UPE scheme in Nigeria failed was because efficient planning and preparation were sacrificed at the altar of urgency. In spite of this, the fact remains that mass literacy is the greatest challenge for national development. The above assertion is further advanced by (Awokoya, 2004), in (Fafunwa, 2004) ^[5], when he opined that educational development is imperative and urgent if Nigeria must stand as an indivisible country, this he said must be treated as a national emergency, second to war.

It was in the light of this that the Nigerian government embraced the UBE scheme as a veritable education venture to address all the anomalies inherent in her previous educational systems. The implementation guidelines for UBE program in Nigeria as provided by the Federal Ministry of Education among others states that the UBE is aimed at:

1. Creating in the whole citizenry a solid cognizance for instruction and a solid sense of duty regarding its thorough advancement.
2. To give free all inclusive fundamental training to each Nigerian of school going age
3. To decrease definitely the occurrence of drop-out from formal educational system through enhanced significance, quality and proficiency.
4. To cater for youthful people who for some reason have needed to interfere with their tutoring and also other out of school youngsters/immature through suitable types of integral ways to deal with the arrangements and advancements of fundamental instruction.
5. To guarantee the obtaining of proper levels of education, numeracy, manipulative, correspondence and fundamental abilities and additionally the morals, and esteems required for establishing strong frameworks for deep rooted learning.

According to (Obanya, 2003; Ogeh, 2015) ^[12, 14], the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program is a monumental National Educational development enterprise, which should be fully embrace by all Nigerians school age, to drastically lessen the frequency of drop out from the formal educational system. The targets additionally guarantees the securing of suitable levels of proficiency, numeracy, manipulative open and fundamental abilities and also the qualities required for establishing a solid framework for long lasting learning. In response, the individual will be able to live a fulfilled life and discharge their civic duties completely (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2012) ^[15].

However, the Universal Basic education programme has been seriously challenged in the area of poor planning and poor execution. (Udoh, 2012) ^[18], maintained that the UBE in encouraging mass enrolment into the secondary school without a corresponding provision for the absorption of the product into the Universities, has created a reserved army of unemployed youths who roam the streets swelling the population of deviants and criminals. Like the 6.3.3.4 system, the program took off without adequate preparation and provision for teachers and facilities to translate the philosophy of the first nine year compulsory program into reality. Hence the programme is not different from what has

been in existence, than a mere change of nomenclature of the educational system. Most graduates of the nine year basic programme lack the requisite basic skills that is to make them self reliant or to even employ other applicant as was envisaged in the design of the programme. For this reason many scholars consider the UBE scheme as a failure in process that lacks coordination and dynamism.

A Comparative Analysis Of The Upe And The Ube

Looking at the objectives of the Universal Primary Education scheme the (UPE) and the Universal Basic education Scheme the (UBE), both educational programme are targeted at free, mass, compulsory relevant education for all Nigerian school age children, to eliminate illiteracy and stimulate national development.. However, it is worthy of note that while the UPE was a six year education programme, targeted at improving the overall school enrolment in the country at the primary level, to eliminate the regional educational disparity between the various regions in Nigeria and to stimulate national development. On the other hand, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a nine year uninterrupted education programme of 6 years primary school and 3three year junior secondary school. The UBE scheme also provides for formal and non-formal and informal education, not only for children of school age, but for adolescents and adults who for one reason or the other could not attend school at the appropriate time; to equip them with relevant skills to enable them earn a living and contribute to overall national development. (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2022) ^[15] affirms that the ultimate aim of the UBE scheme is "Education For All", and this includes education for the advantaged and the disadvantaged, the gifted and the uneducable, the physically handicapped and the non-handicapped,, the nomadic, the poor, rich etc.,. In fact the UBE scheme is an educational broad spectrum that covers every single varieties of individual that make up the society. Similarly, both programmes are to be free- fee- paying, compulsory, and aimed at eliminating illiteracy, ignorance poverty and stimulating national development.

Matters Arising

The Universal Primary Education programme(UPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme were both lofty educational programmes that were targeted to revolutionize education in Nigeria, thus eliminating, illiteracy and stimulating national development and national unity. Unfortunately this was not to be, due mainly to poor planning and poor implementation. Discussing the poor implementation syndrome that has characterized the Nigerian education system. (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2022) ^[15], maintains that the formulation of appropriate educational programme has never been the problem of Nigeria. Rather the challenge has always been that of poor execution of the lofty policies. Okoosaye-Orubite, argues that more often than not, Nigerian education policies suffers what he called "epileptic" execution. (Alagoa, 1999) ^[13], also affirms that the Nigerian problem has been that of putting "our ideas into practice". No matter how lofty and refined an educational policy might be, if the necessary preliminary activities are not taken care of, the programme is bound to fail. This had been the challenges to the Nigerian education system. For example, in the nineteen fifties, the UPE scheme in the Eastern Region failed woefully because of poor planning and consultation, besides the paucity of finance. This has also been the challenges with the UPE, and the UBE at the national level that has created a

yawning gap between the objective of the programmes and actual implementation. Both programmes suffered from: poor public enlightenment and social mobilization, poor data collection and analysis, lack of proper planning, monitoring and evaluation, poor infrastructure poor funding and lack of qualified teachers to teach some of the practical subjects that are expected to stimulate self employment and sustainable development as was acquired by students. In some of the schools in the rural areas, pupils and students sit the floor to learn under leaking roof. In some rural areas, schools teachers are not available, most teachers prefer schools in the city, while the schools in the rural areas are neglected and poorly staffed. Even some schools in the cities too are over- crowded and poorly ventilated for effective teaching and learning to take place. Worst still, monitoring and supervision is another challenge. Due to poor monitoring and poor supervision, many teachers report to school very late after the first three lessons and leave school before the last two lessons in on daily class time-table in the name and excuses for “school run”. (Ikem and Reuben, 2022) ^[7], maintain that many man hour of the day are wasted on the road by parents in the name of “school- run”, leading to low productivity in the work place. In some schools in the city, ladies who have one link or the other to political big weights in the state hardly subjects themselves to the school rules and regulation. Teachers in this category are outlaws as the principal lacks the spine to enforce discipline that will make them sit up to their duties. Similarly, as almost everything in Nigeria now is politicised – recruitment, appointment, promotion, the situation is such that “round pegs are seen in square holes”, thus turning the whole programme a jamboree and a “political- patron- client affaire”. Worst still, many teachers and principals in attempt to augment their salaries, have introduced various kinds of obnoxious levies and dues that skier pupils from school.

Conclusion

The UPE and the UBE programmes were both national education programmes sponsored by the Federal government of Nigeria to make education accessible to all in Nigeria. Both programmes were expected to be free, universal and compulsory, to eliminate illiteracy, encourage national unity/integration and stimulate sustainable national development. Education For All (EFA), was the watch-word. Unfortunately, this was not be, given the poor planning and execution that had always characterised many Nigerian education policies. To achieve education for that will eliminate, illiteracy, ignorance, stimulate sustainable national development that will encourage national unity and integration, will require a determined will, transparency of purpose, proper planning and strategic execution of policies. This should be the handled by professionally specified agency that should be accountable to the government for the success or failure of the programme. The agency should be responsible for the recruitment, promotion and discipline of the personnel including teachers and principals in the schools To contain the challenge of paucity of fund, a Trust Fund should be designated for such programme, and managed by a supervised body. Quarterly Supervision, monitoring, evaluating and reporting should be encouraged to keep every teacher on their toe. Appointment and placement to duties should be devoid of political affiliation. Other nations of the world have attained development through their educational policies, Nigeria can attain same if the highlighted challenges are taken care of.

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