

## UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examined the universal basic education (UBE) as a panacea for socio economic and political development in Nigeria. The paper observed that the major goals of the UBE such as numeric, Literacy and Acquisition of manipulating skills by people can help to modify Nigerian socio economic and political parochialism and thereby leading to socio economic and political development in Nigeria. Major objectives of the UBE programs were also examined. Recommendations were thereafter made on how to further enrich socio - economic and political development in Nigeria through Universal Basic Education, such as the need to employ qualified and zealous teachers to effectively implement the scheme.*

### Introduction

Education is and has always been the key to emancipation and freedom from anxiety, fear and want. For this reason, the national policy on education (2004) clearly acknowledged Education as "an instrument par excellence". For transforming the society and achieving the national goals of: a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a great and dynamic economy, a strong, united and self-reliance nation and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. Quality education is the most powerful instrument for social progress and remains the greatest power yet known to man for his own development (Njoku, 2005). Universal basic Education is the cornerstone for the realization of government's social and economic reforms. Like the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) amongst others, UBE is a Nigerian product targeted at our basic educational, socio - economic and political development. According to Oboegbulem, (2001) and Onwuka, (2002), by exposing a vast segment OF Nigerian population to basic knowledge and skills,

adult literacy and non formal education, UBE is potential instrument for value reorientation in Nigeria.

Leader in Nigeria generally understand the importance of investing in basic education for development. This is because they recognized that high level of literacy and numeracy are pre requisites for creating a strong awareness in the area of socio - economic and political development.

This paper however examines the concept of basic education, origin of UBE, Objectives of UBE, and finally examines ways through which UBE enhances socio economic and political development in our country, Nigeria.

### **Basic Education Defined.**

Basic education according to Okedara (2001) is equivalent to primary education. It is the first pillar of formal education in the educational system of any nation. Some scholars have regarded basic education as compulsory education (for the child) which is supposed to be pre-requisites to social, economic and political advancement or development of the people anywhere. Basic education is the pillar on which other levels of education are built. It can also be referred to as the fundamental education which provides new skills, knowledge as well as attitudes to the people to function maximally in the environment in which they find themselves.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), (2004) states that:

“Basic education shall be of 9 - year duration comprising 6- years of primary education and 3- years of junior secondary education and it shall be free and compulsory. It shall include adult and non formal education Programs at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adult and out of school youths”.

UNESCO, (1997) sees basic education as:

“All forms of organized education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults including literacy and numeracy, as well as the general knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that they require to survive, develop their capacities, live and work in

dignity, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions and continue learning”.

### **The Origin of Universal Basic Education (UBE).**

The origin of the universal basic education (UBE) programme can be dated back to two major sources. That is international collaboration and national aspirations. On international scene, the story of UBE dates back to 1961, as part of recommendations of Addis Ababa conference, which states that African countries should aim at providing Universal Primary Education (UPE) and that attention should be given to on-the-job training. The conference also stated long time objectives which include:

- Universal free and compulsory primary education
- Priority to teacher training and adaptation and continuous reform of the content of education among other recommendations.

Nigeria officially adopted these views later in 1976 when compulsory Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched. In 1990, Nigeria became a signatory to yet another international decision on promotion of Universal Basic Education (UBE). The Jomtein declaration and framework for Action on education for all laws was launched. The declaration sees education in its broadcast sense of “a close articulation of the formal, the non- formal and informal approaches to mechanism for the awakening and all round development of the human potential (FRN)

The broad aim is fundamentally to lay a foundation for life long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning to learn, self- awareness, citizenship and life skill (Oboegbulem, 2003). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was however launched in September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999 by president Olusegun Obasanjo, as a rebirth of Universal Primary Education (UPE). The UBE programme is designed to last for nine years in order to make the graduates be gainfully employed and proceed to higher education.

There are three components of the UBE scheme, namely:

- Formal Basic Education encompassing the first nine years of schooling (Primary and Junior Secondary Education) for all children;
- Nomadic education for school –age children of pastoral nomads and migrants fishermen; and

- Literacy and non – formal education for out – of school children, youth and illiterate adults.

To achieve this goal according to Denga (1999) and Onwuka (2002), implementation at all levels of Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme should be done by practical, exploration, play and experimental methods.

### **Objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

According to the federal Republic of Nigeria (2002), the implementation guidelines for the universal basic education programme have specific objectives as follow:

- 1) Developing in the citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its promotion;
- 2) The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school – going age;
- 3) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system (through improved reliance quality and efficiency of schooling);
- 4) Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling; and
- 5) Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeric, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

### **Implementation Approaches and Strategies for Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme.**

The following approaches and strategies according to Federal Ministry of Education (1999) will be adopted for successful implementation of the UBE scheme:

- i) Enactment of necessary legislation;
- ii) Articulation of enabling policies
- iii) Sensitization and mobilization of the target groups and all stakeholders;
- iv) Adequate funding;
- v) Optimal allocation and efficient utilization of resources;
- vi) Adequate teacher training, recruitment and motivation;
- vii) Effective co – ordination of activities;

- viii) Encouragement and stimulation of the active participation of the private sector, non – governmental and voluntary organization, as well as local communities in the scheme;
- ix) Establishment of working partnership and collaboration with the international community and donor agencies; and
- x) Regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

### **Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria.**

Since inception of Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, various Nigerian Scholars and researchers have identified some factors hampering the full achievement of the objectives of the scheme in Nigeria. Adewumi (2001) for instance, identified: inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum as a major problem of basic education in Nigeria. Ivowi (1984), Ahmed (1998) and Tahir (2001) stressed that basic education curricular hitherto have tended to alienate the learners from the community, rather than integrate them into the community. They suggested the need to review and enrich basic education curricular to ensure that they meet individual needs on one hand and societal and national goals on the other hand. Girl – children are being removed from the school for many reasons, including religious beliefs, early marriage as well as economic advantages. Exposure to quick money business has also made some boys to be withdrawn from the schools in Western and Eastern parts of the country, Nigeria. There has being a wider educational gap among Eastern Northern and Western parts of Nigeria. In the North, Quranic schools are preferred to formal education; women in '*pudah*' are often prevented from participating in formal Western education. Nomadic schools have not been heavily patronized by the concerned nomads. No wonder, Osokoya (2008) submits that with respect to delivery of educational services to the children of nomadic, pastoralist and artisanal migrant fishermen, records show an insignificant number participating in formal and Non – formal education. Okoro (2000) for example recorded that out of the estimated population of 9.3 million nomadic peoples in Nigeria, only 0.02% pastoral nomads were literate while 2.0% was recorded for the migrant fishermen. The major constraints to their participation in formal and non – formal education is the fact that they are constantly moving from one area of the country to another in search of water and pasture for their animals in the case of the pastoralists and for fish in the case of fishermen (Osokoya, 2008).

Nevertheless, the stakeholders as well as the government did not fold their arms and silent about the problems, rather they sensitized, enlightened and mobilized leaders, parents, learners and others, interested in basic education. This effort has increased

the gross enrolment figure between 1990 and 1994 as reported by Okedara (2001) from 13,607,249 (out of which 7,729,677) were boys and 7,134,580 were girls). This invariably increased the number of primary schools in Nigeria from 35, 443 to 380,849. As such, the enrolment of girls increased from 43 percent in 1990 to 55.93 percent in 1994. In addition, other noticeable achievements of the UBE so far are:

- Renovation of schools and establishments of new schools, particularly in the urban areas (Salawu, 2001);
- Increase in enrolment, the primary school enrolment moved from 14.8 million in 1993 to over 17 million by 2001 (Denga, 2002);
- Improved conditions of service for teachers; and
- Supervision of basic educational practices in Nigeria (Osokoya, 2008).

**Universal Basic Education: a panacea for Socio-Economic and Political Development in Nigeria.**

As pointed out earlier, it can be discovered from the objectives of the UBE that if the scheme is properly implemented and monitored, it will bring many benefits to an individual and the Nigeria in general in the areas of socio- economic and political development.

Firstly, since no knowledge is a waste and no matter how small or micro education acquired by a child, it will definitely have befitting impact on him / her, hence, effective acquisition of basic education serves as foundation for other levels of education for a child and subsequently makes the child to be useful to him/ herself and the society he finds him/ herself.

Basic education enhances high level of literacy and numeracy. This to a larger extent facilitates a proper documentation and mastering of Nigerian culture, customs, traditions and language. These are essential ingredients of promoting people's social lives and affiliations.

Acquisition of essential skills is an integral part of universal Basic Education. This provides opportunities for the children to contribute their quota maximally to the social, economic and political realms in Nigeria.

Since, Universal Basic Education (UBE) is free and compulsory to every Nigerian child, giving him (child) these opportunities and rights confers on him respect and a

sense of pride and belonging which every human being desires. Thus, empowering him to positively influence the socio- economic and political conditions in Nigeria.

In the same vein, economically, a literate, educated and goal – oriented employee receives better remuneration. In this regard, Universal Basic education (UBE) improves literacy level among people and therefore enhancing their economic power. Thus, UBE is better valuable if it incorporates the skills of problem – solving, in – depth thinking in addition to basic skills in reading and writing.

Besides, where citizens are able to think deeply on their needs, such gives rise to the development of technical know – how to solve man’s or individual’s vast problems.

Closely related to the above, when Universal Basic education scheme is considered along with the political development in Nigeria, it enhances politically developed country. Also, literate councilors will be elected and able to make his won views known to the public, ready to support the programmes of the government that favour the citizenry and promotes a democratized nation. In fact, if all Nigerians could receive sound basic education and practice the skills acquired, our nascent democratic system would metamorphose to a permanent feature of our governance.

### **Conclusion**

It has been declared that Universal Basic education can help to modify our socio – economic and political parochialism. Thus, the government should ensure that the UBE programmes are properly implemented in the country and enhance her financial commitments to the scheme. These amongst others shall make the scheme to accord a success story for Nigeria in the areas already pointed out.

### **Recommendations**

In order to further enrich socio economic and political development in Nigeria through Universal Basic Education (UBE), the following recommendations should be considered:

There should be more awareness and enlightenment programmes for the parents and stakeholders in education to release their children of school age for enrolment.

Qualified and certificated teachers should be employed to implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme in Nigeria.

Enough Fund Should be provided by the government for the scheme. Hence, teacher's salaries and allowances should be increased to motivate and retain experienced ones and attract new ones into the profession.

Adequate materials and equipment in terms of textbooks, libraries, and chairs e.t.c. should be put in place.

There should be good and adequate monitoring and evaluating strategies to ensure effective implementation of the scheme.

Where possible, a law should be enacted to punish parents who withdraw their children from school for the purpose of early marriage and / or religious belief.

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