

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION: THE JOURNEY SO FAR IN BORNO, BAUCHI AND TARABA STATES, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examined the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme in Borno, Bauchi and Taraba states, Nigeria. The major problems that the paper looked at include lack of infrastructural facilities, storage of teaching and learning material and qualified teachers. Observation and documented evidences from the three ministries of Education, Local Education Authorities and Universal Basic Commission were used in collecting the data. The study revealed that some of the teachers recruited to participate in the programme had fake certificates. This was discovered through verification of results by the UBE commission in particular, Borno state. Despite the problems observed, the UBE has in the three states employed over 7,000 teachers as well as built and renovated classrooms. It was recommended among other things that, statistical information on the components that makes teaching and learning effective should be considered before embarking on such important educational programme for the nation.*

### Introduction

Universal Basic Education is the first stage of education. In some countries, it is described as primary, basic, elementary or fundamental. It could also be defined as compulsory minimum and essential education for every school age child. In Nigeria context, it is used to describe the minimum education in the formal system that every school age child must attained (Balami 2009). The origin of the Universal Basic Education programme can be traced to the past experiences of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in Nigeria. Ugbede (2000) observed that the first

experience was in the Western Nigeria in 1955. This was followed by Eastern Nigeria in 1957 and that of Sokoto in Northern Nigeria in 1976.

Universal Primary Education was a good programme for the entire nation, but because of certain factors/reasons, the programme failed. One of the major reasons why the programme failed was due to lack of proper planning. Statistical information on the number of teachers on ground and those to be recruited, number of students in the existing schools and those to be enrolled, the existing classrooms and those to be constructed, facilities on

ground and those to be procured and sources of additional funding other than the one by the Federal Government were not planned or determined before the programme commenced. In fact there are evidences to show that educational planners were not deeply involved in the planning of the Universal primary education in Nigeria. Another strong factor that led to the failure of Universal primary education was the fall in oil price. The fall in oil price led to the withdrawal of the funding of primary education by the Federal Government in 1979. The lack of financial backing from government led to the collapse of the UPE structures. Also, contributed to the collapse of UPE was lack of payment of teacher's salaries.

The universal Basic Education was formally launched by the then president Obasanjo on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1999. The objectives of the programme as specified in the implementation guideline by Government were as follows:

1. Development in the entire citizenry, a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its various promotions.

2. Provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system.
4. Catering for young persons, their schooling as well as other/out school children or adolescent through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the provision of Universal Basic Education.
5. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for the lifelong living, Ladi (2010) in Yoloye, (2004).

It is strongly believed by most Nigerians that the National development would be achieved if the goals of the Universal Basic Education are fully implemented. This paper therefore determined the obstacles or problems militating against the smooth implementation of the UBE programme in Taraba, Bauchi and Borno States. Also, success recorded since the inception of the programme are also highlighted by the paper.

Basically, the Federal Government did not consider the following vital components that make teaching and learning effective before embarking on the programme. These vital components are:

1. Structures on ground in all the primary schools in the country.
2. Facilities available and those to be procured
3. The number of students to be accommodated
4. Teachers on ground and those to be recruited
5. Relevant books required and libraries
6. Financial implications.
7. Sources of additional funding
8. Graduate unemployment
9. Implementation strategies and the zeal to implement according to the plan.

These statistical information were not planned, just over night, those at the helms of affairs sat and urged the government to embark on the programme without involving relevant people such as educational administrators, curriculum planners,

parents and indeed all stakeholders. Government could not learn from the past experience and her inability to plan the UBE based on the available statistical information, resulted into a number of problems.

Study conducted on the implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme by Mustapha (2010) in Taraba state revealed a number of problems militating against the smooth implementation of the U.B.E. programme in the state. Two methods of data collection (observation and documents) were used in gathering the data. Mustapha went round some selected Local Education Authorities in Taraba state and inspected all the structures and facilities put in place as well as those renovated and built by the commission. He was also at the Headquarters of the UBE, Taraba state where information on employment, verification and other documented information were gathered. After the trip the above mentioned areas in Taraba state by Mustapha, the following problems were revealed:

1. Over 2000 teachers were employed for the implementation of the UBE. Unfortunately, some of the teachers joined the scheme with fake certificates

2. Statement of results and testimonials were used by the applicants which were turned down shortly after the verification by the commission.
  3. Many teachers recruited were posted to private schools instead of government schools and this created a shortage of teachers in public schools in the state.
  4. Some school age children particularly in rural areas of Bauchi state are not enrolled in schools.
  5. Participants are not adequately monitored and supervised.
  6. The ₦10,000 monthly allowance is not adequate to sustain the participants and this little amount is heavily charged by banks.
- Furthermore, studies conducted on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education by Ladi (2010) in Borno, and Bose (2010) in Bauchi states revealed similar problems discovered by Mustapha in Taraba.
- Ladi and Bose used the same method of data collection as Mustapha in Taraba. Thus, the findings of the studies in the two states are as follows:
1. Teachers posted to Northern Borno deserted their schools and sought redeployment to other parts of the state.
  2. Some got admission to universities and left without permission from the appropriate authorities.
  3. Most of the participating teachers in Borno are not properly monitored and supervised by the UBE office.
  4. Delayed and non-payment of the ₦10,000 allowance.
  5. Some of the participating teachers joined the scheme with fake certificates and therefore could not perform very well.
  6. Nonpayment of (UNICEF) counterpart funding by the state government.
  7. Enrolment is very low in almost all the local government areas of Borno state.
  8. Some UBE schools are still attending classes under trees.
  9. In fact all the components that make teaching and learning listed above which were not considered before the programme took off got worsened in Borno.
  10. For the first phase, over 2000 teachers were recruited for the implementation of the UBE.

Unfortunately, most of the teachers recruited joined the scheme with forged Degree, Diploma and NCE certificates

11. Bauchi state government also recruited over 1000 teachers during the second phase and most of them went into the scheme with statement of result and testimonials which later became problem to the organization.
12. Many of the teachers recruited were posted to private schools which created shortage of qualified teachers in public schools.
13. Some school age children particularly in rural areas of Bauchi state are not enrolled into schools
14. Participants are not adequately monitored and supervised
15. The ₦10,000 monthly allowance is not adequate to sustain the participants and this little amount is heavily charged by banks.

### **The major problems militating against smooth implementation of UBE programme in the three states**

Due to improper planning as mentioned above, the UBE schools in the three states are operating in difficult situation. The schools lack infrastructural facilities, shortage of teaching and learning materials, qualified teachers and over-crowded classes due to excess enrolment. These conditions in which the UBE programme operates have made many Nigerians to wonder why policies which have direct bearing or impact on citizens are rushed. Adeyinka (2003), Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) and Arinde (2007) acknowledged that Nigeria has tried in the past in providing sound basic education for all her citizens. But because of lack of planning and the rush, such programmes could not survive. This view is supported by Okeke (1984). Okeke pointed out that Nigeria is a country in a hurry, that there are several giant strides taken in Nigeria educational plans that have failed because of poor or no planning at all.

Another obstacle to smooth implementation of the UBE programme in the three states is that of inadequate infrastructural

facilities. The UBE schools visited in Borno, Taraba and Bauchi revealed that classroom accommodation, chairs, offices, library and laboratories were all lacking. A classroom meant for forty students is overcrowded with over 300 students. The few available classrooms lacked desks and chairs. A class of 50 students, especially in the rural areas take their lessons under trees. Ninety percent of the students seat on bare floor. Adeyinka (2003) observed that the situation is unacceptable and must be changed.

The study further revealed that in all the UBE schools in the three states, qualified teachers are lacking seriously especially in the rural areas. Teachers are undoubtedly the managers of knowledge. Record from the commission revealed that, 58 teachers recruited for the scheme have either left for higher education or deployed to other schools. In fact the most affected are the schools in rural areas. Particularly in Borno state. Half of those posted to Northern Borno have left their areas of primary assignments. Even the head teachers could not account for where the teachers have gone to. And in most cases replacement are not done because qualified teachers are hard to come by.

Another problem militating against the smooth implementation of the

Universal Basic Education in the three states is funding. Federal government is the major source of funding universal basic education scheme. State governors are reluctant in funding Universal Basic Education in their states. In fact, even the counterpart funding that they suppose to pay before they get the full payment from the World donors (UNICEF) are not paid, particularly, Borno state Government. For the past 9 years, counterpart funding were not paid by the past administration until the present administration under the able leadership of Governor Kashim Shettima, where many millions were paid as counterpart funding.

#### **Success achieved or being achieved so far**

Although implementation of Universal Basic Education is full of problems as observed above, few achievement have been recorded in the three states (Borno, Bauchi and Taraba). For example in all the three states, few structures have been put in place in most of the schools chosen for the programme. Also, more than 6,000 teachers have been employed in the three states for the programme. These teachers and the serving ones have received several trainings organized by millennium development project.

A field investigation carried out by the writers revealed that the present administration under the leadership of governor Kashim Shettima has embarked on a number of measures with the aim of revitalizing education at all the levels in the state. The writers adopted the same method of Data collection used by Musa, Ladi and Bose. That is observation and documents from commission. Borno State were gathered and the investigation relatively following measures. These measures include:

1. Creation of higher education ministry
2. Appointment of 3 seasoned and competent commissioners to head education at the three levels (Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Universal Basic Education (UBE).
3. Settlement of counter funding
4. Collection of over 4 billion naira from United National International Education Fund (UNICEF)
5. Settlement of WAEC and NECO fees amounting to ₦180 million Naira
6. Increase in Secondary school feeding from 20 million to 30 million Naira
7. Setting up feeding committee at the state and the zonal levels and is headed by an Educationist in the person of Mohammed Adam.
8. Setting up Education task force assurance committee to monitor the quality of Education at the three levels and is headed by a seasoned retired Federal director in the person of Usman Jidda.
9. Increase and payment of scholarship allowances to all Borno state students in various higher institutions in the country
10. Increase in allowances to law students and distribution of lap tops to all Borno State law students in law school.
11. Distribution of 3 billion Naira to 27 local Education Authorities throughout the state for the construction of classrooms, staff offices, multi-purpose halls, conference halls and very important persons (VIP) toilets in all the selected primary schools in the state.
12. Formation of committee to monitor enrolment into primary

schools in all the 27 local government areas of Borno state.

13. Renovation of some selected secondary schools in the state (Yerwa GGSS Maiduguri, government College Maiduguri and others)
14. Renovation of some higher institution, specifically Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri and Mohammed Goni college of legal and Islamic studies.

All the measures listed above are already put in place. Effort is being made in area of funding and leadership of the three levels of education in the state. In fact millions of Naira was paid as counterpart funding. In return, governor Kashim Shettima has collected more than four billion Naira from the United International Children Education (UNICEF). Using this money, the governor through the ministry of Universal Basic Education has distributed three billion Naira to various contractors handling the projects in the 27 local Education Authorities. Already work has commenced in all the schools selected in the 27 local government areas. Works currently going on include construction of classroom, staff offices, multi-purpose halls and VIP toilets.

In area of leadership of the education sector and in order to revitalize education at the three levels of Education in the state. The governor of Borno state has appointed three seasoned and qualified commissioners to head the education sector.

### **Conclusion**

The study was conducted to determine the problems militating against the smooth implementation of Universal Basic Education in Borno, Bauchi and Taraba States, Nigeria. Problems revealed by the study include; lack of proper planning on the statistical information on the components that makes teaching and Learning effective, lack of infrastructural facilities, shortage of teaching and learning materials, qualified teachers and fake or forged certificates used by some applicants to get employment with the UBE. Despite these problems, the study further revealed that, successes were recorded in the areas of employment, new structure put in place.

### **Recommendations**

1. Proper planning of (statistical information) on the components that makes teaching and learning effective must be considered before embarking on such



- important Educational programme for the nation. Educational administrators, curriculum specialists, parents and stakeholders on education should be involved in the planning process as well as the implementation of the programme.
2. Massive expansion of infrastructural facilities to accommodate the anticipated increase in enrolment in all primary schools in the three states (Borno, Bauchi and Taraba states)
  3. A deliberate attempt should be made to raise enrolment by 100 percent. This recommendation is also in line with the spirit of UBE programme.
  4. Massive procurement of relevant text-books for the primary schools so as to improve the pupil-book ratio.
  5. Construction of new more classrooms.
  6. Rehabilitation of the existing classrooms, office, toilets as well as play grounds in all the UBE schools.
  7. The three states should promptly pay their counterpart funding to UNICEF, which in turn makes them get their regular payment from World assisted body.
  8. Only qualified teachers (NCE, Diploma in Education, B.A. Ed. B.Sc. Ed. B.Ed. M.Ed.) should be employed to teach in the UBE schools.
  9. Original documents submitted by applicants should be varied from the issuing institutions before employing such applicants.
  10. Funding of Universal basic Education should not be left for the Federal Government alone. States, Local Governments, Wealthy individuals and stake holders should also assist in funding UBE schools.
  11. All the measures taken to improve Education by Borno state Government above should also be taken by the remaining two states.

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