

Management of Policy Implementation Process in Universal Basic Education in Nigeria: The Evidence from Practice

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Abstract: *This paper is titled Management of policy implementation process in universal basic education in Nigeria. Keywords such as management, policy, policy implementation, and universal basic education among others were defined. Objectives of universal basic education were listed and they include; the provision of compulsory free and universal basic education and reducing the incidence of dropping out from formal school among others. Federal and state government implementation strategies such as the creation of the U.B.E. commission, provision of implementation guidelines, and effective monitoring of U.B.E implementation to ensure quality among others were as well listed. Also, the effects of the policy implementation process and U.B.E. were listed to include; insufficient funds, inadequate staff, and inadequate physical facilities among others. Based on these factors, problems of implementing the U.B.E program were identified and they include; poor planning, inadequate funding, inadequate teacher empowerment, and poor school plant management and administration among others. Suggestions were also made based on the problems and they include adequate planning and projection, adequate funding, empowerment of teachers, and schools should be constructed in a conducive environment and well administered among others.*

Keywords: *Management, Policy, Policy Implementation, Universal Basic Education and Policy Implementation Process.*

Introduction

Education has essentially been a step-by-step process in shaping human life and building society. The knowledge acquired through education helps the individual fit in the changing world at any point in time.

The UBE program was designed to achieve the objective of formal education by providing free, compulsory education for every child of school-going age, reducing school dropout, and improving education relevance, quality, and efficiency among other objectives stipulated in the UBE Act of 2004 Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2004). Based on the stated objectives, the UBE program was adequately supported and well-funded by the government of Nigeria and international agencies, such as the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the form of grants and loans to ensure the implementation of the reform. In 2013, the World Bank's expenditure on education in Nigeria was over US\$300 million (World Bank Report, 2013).

The UBE policy was introduced in 1999 and embraced by the governments of African countries towards ensuring free, compulsory, and uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education for every child of school age by 2050. Nigeria is one of those countries that started the implementation of the UBE policy in 2000. It is now over 2 decades since the implementation of the UBE program, yet the most populous and relatively wealthy nation across Sub-Sahara Africa still struggles with the same problems that face other nations in the continent. These problems include a rapidly increasing population, a slow-growing economy, and many unschooled children (Bolaji, 2014; Bolaji, Gray, and Campbell-Evans, 2015).

Management and administration of Universal Basic Education are vested with the task of facilitating a redesigned programme in such a way that learners will acquire functional literacy, communication skills, and vocational education. Asodile (2014) points out that the UBE programme was structured to be compulsory for all children who will be provided with free uniforms, books, and free lunch. A close look at the aforementioned views reveals that management and administration of Universal Basic Education ought to provide a lifelong learning foundation that will culminate in individual and national development. Hence UBE is aimed at ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative, and life skills as well as ethical, moral, and civic values among other laudable objectives penned down. Universal Basic Education in Nigeria which is now advocated to anchor functional education for sustainable national development as Okonkwo as stated by Uga and Fanan (2019) suggests remains an issue for concern due to the enormous challenges posed to the management and administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. Okoroma, as stated by Aja, Egwu, Aja-okorie, Ani, and Amuta (2018) in his study on the evaluation of the 3- 3 aspects of the National policy on education, observed that the following factors have hindered the effective implementation of the policy. They are; Inadequately qualified staff, inadequate physical facilities/equipment, insufficient funds, and Non-availability of guidance and counseling services corroborating these findings.

The Concept of Management

Babarinde as stated by Uga and Fanan (2019) defined management as the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts which is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, staffing directing, and controlling.

The Concept of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E)

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a free, compulsory, and 9-year education programme comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. It also includes adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels for adults and out-of-school youths (FRN, 2004). Okoro as stated by Aja , Egwu, Aja-Okorie, Ani, and Amuta (2018) described the UBE programme as an expression of the strong desire of the government to eliminate illiteracy by raising the level of awareness and general education opportunities of the entire citizenry in Nigeria. The followings are the objectives of UBE according to FRN (2013):

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.

2. The provision of compulsory, free, and 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 relevance, quality, and efficiency.
4. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, 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 the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communication, and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. The scope of UBE includes Programmes and initiatives for Early Childhood Care and Education, Six-year Primary Education, and three (3) years of Junior Secondary Education (Abdullahi and Danjumma 2018).

The Concept of Policy Implementation

The policy is recognized as a plan or course of action by a government, political party, or business designed to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters (Lennon 2009). Policy Implementation according to Viennet and Pont (2017), refers to the administration of the laws, guidelines, and procedures in which various actors, organizations, procedures, and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect to attain policy or program goals. Therefore, education policy implementation is the purposeful and multidirectional change process aiming to put a specific policy into practice and which may affect an education system on several levels (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Policy Implementation Process

Different activities have been included as part of the implementation of universal basic education in the country. One of them is the recruitment and training of new teachers. To be able to permanently improve the literacy, numeracy, and communication skills of students, there is a need to recruit and train teachers who will make such highly possible (Adeyemi, 2007). Apart from the addition of new teachers to those who were currently employed, there is also a need to retrain those who have been employed for a long time in their respective positions to be assured that they have the necessary competence to aid in the achievement of the goals of the universal basic education. Frequent seminars, workshops, and professional contacts with the members of the teaching force in the country have been some of the activities which were undertaken to make the teachers more influential in the achievement of the goals of the education scheme. Nakpodia, Kazeem, and Ige as stated by Muftau and Haziri (2015), it is important that the government hires the right persons for this job because they will be the most influential in the achievement of the learning outcomes as well as with the success of the education scheme.

To make sure that the right people are employed to help the government deliver the goals of the universal basic education program, the following activities also remain part of the endeavors of the government at all levels: improvement in supervision and support system, continuous professional development and full involvement of the members of the teaching force to the educational development programs (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005). In addition, the establishment of new schools, provision of new equipment and resources, venturing into strategies

to be able to increase enrolment, and insurance of various school properties are also some of the other activities which have been initiated as part of the implementation of the universal basic education in the country.

Federal and State Government Implementation Strategies of UBE

Universal Basic Education is not without guidelines for implementation. According to (FRN, 2000) the following guidelines were provided for the implementation of UBE.

1. Creation of UBE Commission
2. Providing Implementation Guidelines Such as public enlightenment and social mobilization, for hull community development, data collection and analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation, recruitment, education, training, retraining and motivation of teachers, infrastructural facilities, textbooks, and instructional materials, improved funding and management of the entire process (Tsafe, 2013).
3. Collaborative Partnership.
4. Effective monitoring of UBE implementation to ensure quality.
5. Giving attention to teachers' professional development. To achieve this, the Commission allocates a certain percentage of the fund for in-service training of teachers, and this cuts across all states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
6. Education of the girl-child and other disadvantaged groups being given greater attention than ever before – improved infrastructural developments led to increased access to basic education.
7. Transformation of the education terrain as it affects basic education in the area of school infrastructural development. This has been achieved through the judicious use of FGN-UBE intervention funds. This is the first time Basic Education has a quantum of funds being released by Federal and State governments (UBE, 2018). Another strategy employed by UBE to achieve its goal is the commencement of the UBE community-initiated self-help project. Here both the community and private sectors are involved in the initiation, implementation, and delivery of projects fully owned by them. Through this, funding will not be the sole responsibility of the UBEC but of the organized Parent-Teachers-Association (PTAs) and Community-Based Organizations. Historically, this has yielded a positive impact as different schools have been able to acquire pressing infrastructures and the communities are also able to claim project ownership (UBE, 2018).
8. Introduction of Federal Teacher Scheme (FTS). The scheme was introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2006.
9. Inter-Agency Cooperation
10. Collaborations with International Development Partners
11. Curriculum Improvement (UBE, 2018).

Policy Implementation and Universal Basic Education

Execution of the policy as planned is very important for the achievement of universal basic education goals. Okoroma as stated by Aja, Egwu, Aja-okorie, Ani and Amuta (2018) in his study on the evaluation of the 3- 3 aspects of the National policy on education observed that the following factors have hindered the effective implementation of the policy. They are:

1. Inadequate qualified staff
2. Inadequate physical facilities/equipment
3. Insufficient funds, and
4. Non-availability of guidance and counseling services corroborating these findings. Similarly, Yakwan and Alagi (2015) identified poor communication processes, capability problems, and dispositional conflicts as general explanations for unsuccessful implementation of educational policies and programmes. Adzongo and Agbe in Yawe (2015) observed the following factors as constraints to educational policy implementation in Nigeria and they include:

1. The nature of the economy
2. The non-economic factors (attitude, culture, and tradition)
3. Tiers of government
4. Availability of resources
5. Public pressure
6. Ambiguity or lack of specificity in policy directives and frequent changes in policy as a result of changes in government. Lending voice on the challenges to effective planning and implementation of educational policies and programs. Nwankwo cited in Ekechukwu (2016) maintained that planning and implementation of educational policies in Nigeria is faced with many challenges among which include:

1. The cart before the horse syndrome
2. Dearth of reliable statistical data
3. Population explosion
4. Depressing economy
5. Bureaucracy
6. Inadequate finances
7. Inadequately qualified manpower and political instability. In the same vein, Okoroma (2006) identified planning with unreliable data, lack of political will, insufficient funds, and corruption as the major hindrances to the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

Problems of Policy Implementation Process and Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

Generally, based on all the listed factors that affect the implementation of U.B.E above, the problems of universal basic education include;

1. Poor planning
2. Inadequate funding
3. Inadequate teacher empowerment
4. Poor school plant management and administration
5. Lack of interest and determination by the government to improve the educational sector
6. Inadequate supervision
7. Lack of qualified teachers
8. Lack of training and retraining of teachers
9. Lack of infrastructure and social amenities in schools

Suggestion

1. Adequate planning and projection
2. Adequate funding
3. Empowerment of teachers
4. Schools should be constructed in a conducive environment and well administered
5. Government should develop more interest and commitment to putting the educational sectors in good shape
6. Proper and periodic supervision should be carried out in schools by professional supervision and the results of the supervision should look it to and take action upon them.
7. Only qualified teachers should be employed after the teacher entrance examination or interview
8. There should be Training and re-training of teachers from time to time to update their knowledge
9. Adequate infrastructures and social amenities like tables, chairs, fans, water, and electricity among other things so that both teachers and pupils will have a perfect atmosphere for teaching and learning.

Conclusion

It is a fact that the UBE policy just like every other policy of Education contained in the National Policy on Education was well drafted and clearly stated. If such policies are followed appropriately as stated, the Nigerian Education Sphere will witness a dramatic rise in terms of

quality, and the attainment of the Nation's objectives. The education sector has witnessed a lot of problems especially, in the implementation phase of all educational policies. This is why the government needs to look for various ways through which these problems can be limited. In doing this there is a need for such efforts to be made with virtues such as equity, trust, reliability, and rationality. With this in place, the Nigerian Educational system will move to the next level.

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