

# Millennium Development Goals and the Universal Primary Education in Nigeria (A Case Study of Ibadan North Local Government, Oyo State)

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## Abstract

The importance and linkage of education to the development of any society is well known. It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education while also improving on the quality of education. Hence, this study focuses on education, particularly achieving Universal Primary Education under the auspices of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria with Oyo State as the case study. The data required for this study were gathered through the use of instruments of questionnaires. The study revealed factors affecting qualitative education which include inadequate funding, inexperienced and lackluster teachers coupled with non-mentally stimulating teaching methods. Based on the findings, the study recommended the following (a) thorough trainings of teachers through workshops and seminars (b) the state government should involve more privileged individuals through its 'Adopt a School' program (c) the syllabus should be modified to accommodate the development and the acquisition of relevant skills (d) schools should be effectively and frequently monitored by the necessary body (e) measures should be taken to discourage students from hawking on the streets after schools hours, this however should be replaced by taking after school lessons. These recommendations are expected to improve the decaying educational standards in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Millennium Development Goals, Universal Primary Education, United Nations Millennium Declaration

## 1. Introduction

In September 2000, 189 world leaders met at the Millennium Summit and committed themselves and their countries to eight goals known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at meeting the needs of the world's poorest people (UNDP, 2005). These goals resulted from deliberations on how to make significant, measurable improvements to people's lives, with the ultimate objective of reducing poverty throughout the world (Ejeh, 2003).

The eight goals, which are to be met in partnership with the world's leading development institutions by the target date of 2015, are to; eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and lastly, develop a global partnership for development (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000). For each of these goals, the world leaders established yardsticks for measuring results, not just for the developing countries but also for the developed countries that assist in providing the funds for development programmes, and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them (UNDP, 2005).

However, for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on Goal 2 which stated explicitly has the following as its targets:

- Ensure, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete full course of primary schooling.
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015 (United Nations Millennium Project, 2005).

With two year remaining for the set goals to be met, and with what is on ground now.

Can Nigeria achieve universal primary education target of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015? Hence, this paper aims at examining the challenges and the feasibility of meeting the Millennium Development Goals and especially on achieving the universal primary education target which will be due in 2015, using Oyo State as case study

These hypotheses will be tested

### Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no relationship between unfettered access to education and level of literacy.

H1: There is a relationship between unfettered access to education and level of literacy.

### Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no relationship between free education and life skills.

H1: There is a relationship between free education and life skills.

### Hypothesis 3

H0: There is no significant relationship between Millennium Development Goals and achieving Universal Primary Education in Oyo State

H1: There is significant relationship between Millennium Development Goals and achieving Universal Primary Education in Oyo State.

This paper will be divided into four parts. Part one is the introduction, part two is the theoretical aspect, part three addresses the genesis of universal basic education in Nigeria and lastly, part four analyses the questionnaires.

#### **1. 2. Theoretical Framework**

Development theory is a conglomeration of theories that studies how desirable change in a nation is made. In recent times, Development as a concept was equated with industrialization, urbanization, modernization and westernization. It was seen as a process through which poor countries gradually assume the qualities of developed countries. More recently, it has been argued that development is a multidimensional concept involving different aspects of human existence such as changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institution, acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty (Edem, 2004).

Seer (1969) set the stage for the search for 'new meaning and measure of development' when he profoundly argued that:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems has been growing worse and especially if all three have, it will be strange to call the result development even if per capita income has doubled (Seer, 1969: 23).

This explains its relevance in the study since the MDGs are a set of specific, quantified and time-bound targets on the various dimensions of human development- income, poverty, hunger, wealth, education, gender inequality and environmental stability.

The theory has a lot to do with the Millennium Development Goals in the sense that development is a conglomeration of theories, about how desirable change in a nation is made and the Millennium Development Goals are a set of specific, quantified and time-targets on the various dimensions of human development- income, poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability (MDGR, 2005).

It therefore becomes obvious that both tends towards development and so in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it is important to put into consideration, the various steps presented by the development theory. Since all development, interventions are to move countries, nations or even societies from a situation which they are seen as being at their worst situation, and then we can come up with a good conclusion for the Millennium Development Goals as a very good and acceptable step towards Nigeria's development.

The concept development being employed here is a very broad one that seeks to encompass the gains that have been made to improve the existential conditions of Nigeria in all fields of human endeavors. In all these there is sufficient evidence to conclude that not much has taken place since the country assumed independence in 1960. A number of measures reflecting the diversity of leaderships the country has experienced since the second republic (1979-1983) have been put in place to tackle the perceived structural imbalance in the economy.

Although these reforms have not been articulated in tandem with the aspirations of the MDGs, there is however no doubt that the extent to which they address the problem of development of a nation-state, particularly the productive forces and the productivity bases, to that extent they are going a long way in meeting the expectations of the MDGs (Yaquab, 2004)

The Millennium Development Goals are steps directed towards a change or also development, and if the MDGs are achieved, then we are sure of Nigeria emerging from being a developing country to a developed country by the year 2015.

This paper shows that these goals can only be achieved if the right methods are put in place, and this is where universal basic education comes in as a method of achieving development in Nigeria's education.

#### **1. 3 Differences and Similarities between UPE and UBE**

Denga (2000) noted that universal access to education has been the prime target for Nigeria, since the middle of the 1970s when the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) scheme blasted off. This led to sharp increase in enrolment from 6.2 million in the 1975/76 session to 14.8 million in 1992. This sharp increase in enrolment without adequate planning created problems. Many educational programmes like UBE launched in the past had failed because of some factors.

Among such factors was inadequate public enlightenment and social mobilization, for full community

involvement. The educationally-conscious Nigerians began to lose faith in the U.P.E. scheme, disparaging the government's effort to finance the system which many concluded was a nightmare.

The overwhelming and unanticipated results of this sudden educational expansion consequent upon the UPE scheme evidenced a profound shortage of learning facilities including space, a severe dearth of teachers and funds to implement the system. Complaints started to be heard from parents and the general public because of the cost imposed on them from a programme that was purported to educate their children free of charge.

In addition, the teachers' morale suffered some battering. Also, various kinds of levies were re-imposed on parents by some state governments in a bid to salvage the scheme. All these happened despite the excellent objectives and philosophy of the programme which were enunciated optimistically in the National Policy on Education published in 1977.

Denga (2000) stated that, in an attempt to avoid the problems which impeded the realization of the objectives of the past educational programmes, the government outlined implementation guidelines to facilitate successful achievement of the staled objectives. The guidelines include:

1. Public enlightenment and social mobilization, for full community involvement;
2. Data collection and analysis;
3. Planning, monitoring, evaluation;
4. Teachers; their recruitment, education, training, retraining, and motivation;
5. Infrastructural facilities;
6. Enriched curricula;
7. Textbooks and instructional materials;
8. Improved funding; and,
9. Management of the entire process.

### **1.3.1 The Need for the Universal Basic Education Scheme**

The training of children and adolescents in the norms and aspirations of the nation is a very veritable instrument for national integration and development. It was expected that educational reforms or re-organization would be carried out to enable Nigeria's education cater for the future professional needs (Ayeni, 2000). The restructuring is important, if we are to expect optimal result from our envisaged objectives of education. The Federal Government's involvement in the organization of UBE scheme was therefore necessary if the integration of the nationals was to be achieved. The scheme was also desirable to enable the Federal Government ensure that children are taught the culture of the society. The desire to inculcate in children the knowledge of literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate made the UBE scheme worthwhile. Apart from the above, there is the need to lay a sound foundation for scientific and reflective thinking, character and moral training and the development of sound attitude, and above all, develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1981).

### **1.3.2 Universal Basic Education: Matters Arising**

The Universal Basic Education as introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria has been described above as laudable but it appears that it is leaving many issues unresolved which are likely to bedevil the programme just as the UPE scheme was.

The name 'Universal Basic Education' ordinarily would have suggested that every Nigerian child, without exception would have access to basic education without hindrance. Now that a ceiling has been placed on the enrolment figures for each state of the federation, it is obvious that limitations have been introduced. This quota limitation, according to the national co-coordinator, was informed by the differential level of illiteracy in the states of the federation (Enemuo, 2000).

But you have to commend the Nigerian government- am referring to both former and present administrations- who are masters at putting worthy policies forward but never back them up with the relevant actions.

Perhaps, at this juncture, it will be necessary to revisit the questions that have been asked by Enemuo, (2000: 8).

(a) While placing a ceiling on the number of pupils registrable in the states, would the programme still be qualified as 'universal'?

The answer to this question is obvious.

(b) Does the placement of ceiling on enrolment figures not portray the UBE scheme as yet another device for strengthening and perpetuating the principles of 'quota system', 'educational disadvantaged' and 'educational advantaged' in admission.

(c) Is attainment of literacy in education measurable in terms of enrolment?

(d) Does the fact that one comes from the so called educationally advantaged state render one also educationally advantaged and vice versa?

(e) Is the UBE really not an instrument for unjustly denying children in some areas access to or right to education and perpetuate illiteracy to the words and spirit of section 18(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria?

(f) Will the UBE scheme not attract similar counter balancing schemes by states whose sensibilities have been

injured by the measure of deprivation as it happened when the Quota Admission Policy Scheme was introduced in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria? And

(g) Will such states not run a counter primary education scheme that will render UBE meaningless?

The word 'universal' according to the Oxford Dictionary of English implies 'relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group; applicable to all group'. The emphasis here is on the phrase 'applicable to all' and this was also the view expressed by Akunga and Attfield (2010: 1) who assert that:

Nigeria as other countries, is striving to ensure that all children have unfettered access to education through the implementation of the universal basic education programme and comprehensive education reforms. However, despite the efforts, the education sector is still characterized by a variety of challenges. This has made access and participation in education for a large number of boys and girls a challenge. Statistics from the 2006 School Census show an enrolment figure of 24,422,918 (male -13,302,269, 54.5%; female - 11,120,649: 45.5%) indicating a gender parity of 83.6%. There are however large geographical differences, with more males enrolled in the primary schools than females in the North while a near parity is recorded in the South. About 65% of primary school children in the North are male while 35% are female. By and large, this fact is replicated by the gender imbalance in participation, whereby girls are relatively disadvantaged.

As said, he is coming from the view of the disadvantaged children in the Northern part of the country. Child education and indeed education in general is very low in that part of the country and this fact is supported with the above statistics. The insecurity problem that is facing the country presently can be partly traced to this fact. A normal Hausa man is against western education and will rather send his child to the mosque where he will learn the ways of Islam. Hence for the goal to adequately live up to its name, much attention must be placed to the Northern part of the country.

#### 1.4 Methodology

In writing this paper both primary and secondary means of data gathering were employed. Primary data were sourced through the use of a structured questionnaire with the aim of giving an accurate fact of the situation in the target population. Data collection for secondary data includes materials as textbooks, journals, newspapers, library research, and internet. The method of analysis that will be used will be descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, table, mean, charts, etc. and correlation analysis shall be adopted for the testing of the hypotheses to describe and explain the targets of the Millennium Development Goals with the focus on achieving Universal Basic Education. Also Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for analyzing frequencies and testing research hypotheses.

##### 1.4.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Correlation analysis was used to measure the significance of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

##### Hypothesis 1:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Millennium Development Goals and Universal Primary Education

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant relationship between Millennium Development Goals and Universal Primary Education.

#### **CORRELATIONS**

		Universal Education	Primary	Millennium Development Goals
Universal Primary Education	Pearson Correlation		1	.205
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.052
	N		91	91
Millennium Development Goals	Pearson Correlation	.205		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052		
	N	91	91	

#### **Coefficient of Determination (C.O.D)**

The coefficient of determination is obtained using formula  $C.O.D = r^2 \times 100\%$

Where r = Pearson Correlation

Thus;

$$\begin{aligned} \text{C.O.D} &= (0.205)^2 \times 100\% \\ \text{C.O.D} &= 0.042025 \times 100\% \\ \text{C.O.D} &= 4.2025\% \end{aligned}$$

The Pearson correlation of  $r = 0.205$  therefore implies 4.2025% shared variance between Millennium Development Goals and Universal Primary Education.

#### Interpretation of results

The relationship between the variables (MDGs and Universal Primary Education) was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. The results from table 1.2.2.1 above show that there is positive correlation (0.205). However, the relationship between both variables is slightly insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

Thus, as obtained from the table  $\{r = 0.205, p > 0.05, n = 100\}$ .

#### Decision

Having found out that there is significant relationship between MDGs and Universal Primary Education, we therefore accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), and reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

#### Hypothesis 2:

$H_0$ : Free education does not improve literacy rate in Oyo state

$H_1$ : Free education improves literacy rate in Oyo state

#### TABLE 1.2.2.2 Chi-square Test

Free education has improved literacy rate in Oyo State

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Disagree	10	22.8	-12.8
Undecided	12	22.8	-10.8
Agree	44	22.8	21.3
Strongly Agree	25	22.8	2.3
Total	91		

#### Test Statistics

	Free education has improved literacy rate in Oyo state
Chi-Square	32.297 <sup>a</sup>
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 22.8.

#### Interpretation of results

The contribution of free education towards literacy was investigated using chi-square test. The results from table 1.2.2.2 above show that free education has significantly improved literacy rate in Oyo state (32.297) at 0.0001 level of significance.

Thus, as obtained from the table  $\{X^2 = 32.2097, p < 0.0001, n = 91\}$ .

#### Decision

Having found out that free education has significantly improve literacy rate in Oyo state, we therefore reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ).

#### Hypothesis 3:

$H_0$ : Free education does not help in reducing the number of children hawking on the street in Oyo state

$H_1$ : Free education helps in reducing the number of children hawking on the street in Oyo state

#### TABLE Chi-square Test

Free education has helped to reduce the number of children on the streets in Oyo State

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Disagree	6	22.8	-16.8
Undecided	14	22.8	-8.8
Agree	41	22.8	18.3
Strongly agree	30	22.8	7.3
Total	91		

### Test Statistics

	free education has helped to reduce the number of children on the streets in Oyo State
Chi-Square	32.648 <sup>a</sup>
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 22.8.

### Interpretation of results

The contribution of free education towards reducing the number of children hawking on the street in Oyo state was investigated using chi-square test. The results from table 1.2.2.3a above show that free education helps in reducing the number of children hawking on the street in Oyo state (32.648) at 0.0001 level of significance. Thus, as obtained from the table { $X^2 = 32.648$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $n = 91$ }.

### Decision

Having found out that free education helps in reducing the number of children hawking on the street in Oyo state, we therefore reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ).

### CONCLUSION

Having understood the importance of education, the central question to be answered remains if the Nigerian government can meet the 2015 target of the Millennium Development Goals and indeed achieve Universal Primary Education. The emphasis here is on the word 'universal' which in this context implies all children between the ages of 2-15, including boys and girls, privileged and the underprivileged will be in school. Well, the answer to that is yes, it is possible. Statistics used in the course of this study indicate that enrolment rate is at 88% and this is very commendable. Of all the 8 goals of the Millennium Development Goals, the success rate in achieving universal primary education exceeds that of the other goals. Government has taken laudable efforts in getting children of school age from off the streets and putting them in schools.

But the following recommendations are important for the Millennium Development Goals to be attained.

**Government** should modify the syllabus to encourage the acquisition of inherent skills like creative arts, creative writing, talent identification and grooming and the conduct of excursions for students to widen their horizon.

The Board should develop an open line of communication that allows for feedback for primary schools. Schools should be able to communicate their challenges (through the head teachers) and such should be summarily responded to.

### The Role of Head Teachers

Apart from communicating challenges to the Board, the Head Teachers should also form a relationship with parents or guardians of pupils.

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