

Evaluation of Implementation of International Education Policy on Universal Literacy (UL) as Perceived by Learners and Organisers in Cross River State; Nigeria

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Abstract

The United Nations policy on Universal Literacy is one of its MDGs that participating nations are to attain by 2015. Nigeria being a signatory to this policy is affected; hence she introduced a nine year compulsory Universal Basic Education programme in her Basic Education Schools, as a major effort in attaining the UN target. However, available evidence on implementation of mass literacy programmes in Nigeria indicates that inadequacy of educational facilities and low commitments of the participants have tended to affect the attainment of set targets. It is postulated that, in order to formulate effective policy for attainment of UNUL targets, educational facilities and teachers, be based primarily on the peculiar needs and views of participants. Therefore, this study was focused on accessing the perception of teachers and students on the adequacy of educational facilities and commitment of teachers on the implementation of the scheme. Two hundred respondents were used. Ex- post facto design was adopted. A 20- item questionnaire constructed on a modified four-point Likerty-type scale was used. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages. The result showed that, instructional facilities and qualified personnel were in short supply in schools. Adequate instructional materials, student welfare and personnel training were recommended.

Keywords: Evaluation, International Education, Universal Literacy, Universal Basic Education.

Introduction

Evaluation of academic programmes, especially those with international objectives is an approach by which the attainment of targets on their implementation enhances comparison among participating nations. Denga (2003:4) defined evaluation as being used interchangeably with assessment. Denga (1985:168) opined that, in a general sense, the term assessment is similar to evaluation as it involves testing, measurement and value judgment. Evaluation of any academic programme more importantly is aimed at ensuring that, the programme is relevant to learners' functional literacy needs. Literacy programmes generally involve the art of reading, writing and counting (Arikpo, Tawo and Ojuah, 2008:9).

Kolawole and Adepoju (2007:018-021) remarked that, functional literacy goes beyond being able to read and write... It is an emancipatory practice that requires people to be able to read, speak and understand whatever is read, and be able to use the knowledge to solve their socio-cultural and economic problems. Functional literacy according to Omolewa (1985:36-43) emerged as a concept, "when literacy efforts were renewed in 1965, under the initiatives of the UNESCO, which after the Teheran meeting that year, began to popularise and verbalise the concept of work-oriented functional literacy. Literacy programmes of the United Nations, in essence, are those programmes, originating from the United Nations and all its arms, and mounted by all the participating nations, and these include Nigeria. Fasokun (2006: 21) confirmed that:

In September 2000, 189 nations met and committed themselves to combat poverty and make development a reality for everyone in the United Nations Millennium Declaration...They emphasised the need for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, guaranteeing a basic education for everyone, and supporting the principles of sustainable development.

Actually, Nigeria's educational policy guarantees equal opportunity to all its citizens to education. For instance, the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2004:1-2) states that:

- 1 Education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education.
- 2 Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability.
- 3 There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, United Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education.

In effect, the current Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria is as a result of Nigeria's policy implementation on, basic educational equality for all Nigerians. Ojo (2006:134-135) reported that:

The issue of equality of education became both the theme of political promises and educational discourse before and after independence... The latest attempt to give education for all especially to children of school-going ages and adults as in (FGN, 2001:1) is the implementation of the UBE scheme and its enactment into law in 2004 as in (FGN, 2004:3). The UBE programme launched in 1999 as in (FGN, 2000a:2) was not based on the readiness of Nigerian government to give equal opportunity of education to the citizens or as a fulfillment of one of election promises alone, rather it was launched with a view to implementing the global educational millennium goals, which came up after a number of protocols and conferences that involve representatives from various countries of the world.

According to Ojo (2006:135), some of the conferences where these goals were arrived at include those on the Table 1:

Table 1: International Conferences Held On Education for All Agenda

S/N	Date	Host Country	Town	Theme
1.	1990	Thailand	Jomtien	Declaration and Framework for Action on Basic Education for All.
2.	1992	Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	Pan African Declaration on the Education of Girls and Women.
3.	1993	India	New Delhi	Declaration of the E-9 countries.
4.	1995	Jordan	Amman	Amman-Reaffirmation: Calling for Forceful Pursuit of the Jomtien Recommendation.
5.	1998	South Africa	Durban	Statement of Commitment to the Promotion of Education for All.
6.	1999	South Africa	Johannesburg	EFA: A Framework for Action in Sub-Saharan Africa.
7.	1999	Argentina	Buenos Aires	One decade of Education for All: The Challenges Ahead.
8.	1999	USA	New York City	World Summit on Children's Education.
9.	2000	Brazil	Recife	Re-Affirmation: Education for All.
10.	2000	Senegal	Dakar	World Education Forum: Post-Jomtien Deliberation.

Source: UBE Annual Report 2001 in Ojo (2006:135:11)

Continuing, Ojo (2006:135) observed that, Nigeria as one of the E-9 countries, that is, countries with highest number of illiterates, has to formulate educational programmes in response to the international call to accommodate Basic Education for All (EFA) and to implement its several goals; such as: universal access to primary education for every child, improved access to early childhood care and development programmes and the reduction of adult illiteracy (WEF, 2006b). However, the extent to which these policies and their objectives are being met appear inadequate.

Statement of the Problem

The assessment of Nigerian education system at all levels reveals that, the standard has fallen so low. For instance, Ngwu (2003:8) stated that:

At the beginning of the third millennium, Nigeria's development indicators and education sector profile are replete with statistics that conjure up images of stubborn underdevelopment, irredeemable poverty, and uncontrollable deterioration in education access, quality and standard of performance". Similarly, Dike (2002:2-8) observed that, the oil boom of the 1970s in Nigeria, coupled with political pressure, led to establishment of many universities in the society; and an explosive expansion in enrolment during this period marked the beginning of the decline in quality of education in the society.

Also, Dike (2002) and Biao (2006) cited inadequate budgetary provision for education at all levels as contributing to fallen standard of education in Nigeria. Given the low standard in education quality and facilities, the commencement of the UBE scheme, backed by the enabling Federal Government Law, was aimed at providing both higher access and quality basic education to all its citizens through the Basic Education Schools. However, research evaluating the progress made so far in the implementation of the UBE scheme in Nigeria, is yet to assess the perception of the students and teachers, with a view to determining; the adequacy of educational facilities and teachers needed for the effective implementation of the UN Universal Literacy and Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) in their Basic Education Schools (BES).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore was to access the perception of teachers and students on the adequacy of

instructional materials, availability of qualified personnel, commitment of the government and the enthusiasm of both the teachers and students concerning the implementation of UN UL and Nigeria's UBE scheme.

Research Question

How do teachers and students perceive the adequacy of instructional materials, availability of qualified personnel, commitment of government and enthusiasm of both the teachers and students on the implementation of UN Universal Literacy and Nigeria's UBE scheme?

Methodology

The study used 200 respondents, which was made up of sixty (60) teachers and one hundred and forty (140) students randomly selected from Government and privately owned Basic Education Schools in Calabar Municipality, Calabar South and Akamkpa Local Government Council Areas of the Cross River State. The ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. This was used because the researchers were not involved in manipulating the independent variables of the study.

A 20- item questionnaire designed by the researchers was used for data collection. This was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A took care of the demographic variables while Section B dealt with the issues investigated in the study. The items were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages as presented in tables 2.

Results

Table 2: Percentage analysis of teachers' perception of the adequacy of instructional materials, availability of qualified personnel, Government commitment, enthusiasm of teachers and students on the implementation of the UN UL and Nigeria's UBE scheme (N=60)

S/N	ITEM	STRONGLY AGREE - 4	AGREE- 3	DISAGREE -2	STRONGLY DISAGREE-1
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
	Adequacy of Instructional Materials				
1	Some of the schools lack adequate instructional materials.	18 (30)	32 (53.3)	10 (16.7)	0 (0)
2	Few schools have a functional library.	4 (6.7)	10 (16.7)	27 (45)	19 (31.6)
3	Few schools have equipped laboratory for practical works.	2 (3.3)	6 (10)	27 (45)	25 (41.7)
4	The schools have inadequate visual and audio-visual materials.	1 (1.7)	7 (11.7)	24 (40)	28 (46.6)
	Availability of Qualified Personnel				
5	Not all the schools have enough trained teachers.	15 (25)	37 (61.7)	6 (10)	2 (3.3)
6	Few teachers have higher degrees in specialises areas.	13 (21.7)	30 (50)	14 (23.3)	3 (5)
7	Teachers are not adequate for all the subjects offered.	11 (18.3)	33 (55)	16 (26.7)	0 (0)
8	The teachers put in enough time to teach.	20 (33.3)	32 (53.3)	8 (13.3)	0 (0)
	Government Commitment				
9	The Federal Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	14 (23.3)	38 (63.3)	5 (8.3)	3 (5)
10	The State Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	12 (20)	34 (56.7)	8 (13.3)	6 (10)
11	The Local Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	14 (23.3)	34 (56.7)	7 (11.7)	5 (8.3)
12	Education Officers and Directors of Area Education Authority visit schools on a regular basis.	18 (30)	31 (51.7)	8 (13.3)	3 (5)
	Enthusiasm of Teachers				
13	Teachers are eager to teach skills relevant to the functional literacy needs of the students.	12 (20)	40 (66.7)	8 (13.3)	0 (0)
14	Teachers work to ensure that students perform well in their examinations.	23 (38.3)	34 (56.7)	3 (5)	0 (0)
15	Teachers are always punctual and stays in school to assist students solve their personal and academic problems.	12 (20)	42 (70)	6 (10)	0 (0)
16	Adequate assignments are given to test knowledge acquired from the lessons	21 (35)	34 (56.7)	5 (8.3)	0 (0)
	Enthusiasm of Students				
17	Student's enrolment in schools is quite high now.	20 (33.3)	27 (45)	7 (11.7)	0 (0)
18	Students are made to perform their given assignments.	38 (63.3)	13 (21.7)	3 (5)	0 (0)
19	Students try to be punctual at classes.	4 (6.7)	33 (55)	22 (36.7)	1 (1.7)
20	Students are made to stay in school to attend their lessons.	8 (13.3)	43 (71.7)	8 (13.3)	1 (1.7)

The result in Table 2 indicates that five broad areas were considered for the study. Each area was measured using four items. The result under adequacy of instructional materials showed that 50 (85.3%) teachers agreed that the schools had adequate instructional material. Fifty-two (86.7%) agreed that the schools had trained teachers, 43 (71.7%) agreed that the teachers had degrees in specialised subject areas. Again 44 (73.3%) agreed that the schools had adequate teachers, and 52 (86.6%) agreed that the teachers put in enough time in teaching.

Under government commitment, a total of 52 (86.6%) teachers agreed that the Federal Government was committed to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria, 46 (76.7%) agreed that the State Government was committed to implementing the programme. A total of 48 (80%) agreed that the Local Government was committed to implementing the programme. Lastly, a total of 49 (81.7%) agreed that the Education Officers, Directors of Area Education Authority and Adult Education Agency Officials visits the schools on a regular basis.

On enthusiasm of teachers, a total of 52 (86.7%) teachers agreed that they were always eager to teach, 57 (95%) agreed that they work to ensure that the students perform well in their examination. Lastly, 55 (91.7%) agreed that adequate assignment were given to test knowledge acquired by the students. Observation of responses on the enthusiasm of students showed that, 47 (78.3%) teachers agreed that the enrolment was adequate, 51 (85%) agreed that they were eager to do their assignments. Also 37 (62.7%) agreed that they were always punctual in classes. Finally, a total of 51 (85%) agreed that they stay back in school to attain lessons.

Table 3: Percentage analysis of students' perception of the adequacy of instructional materials, availability of qualified personnel, Government commitment, enthusiasm of teachers and students on the implementation of the UN UL and Nigeria's UBE scheme (N=140)

S/N	ITEM	STRONGLY AGREE - 4	AGREE -3	DISAGREE - 2	STRONGLY DISAGREE-1
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
1	Adequacy of Instructional Materials				
	Some of the schools lack adequate instructional materials.	6 (4.3)	59 (42.1)	35 (25)	40 (28.6)
2	Few schools have a functional library.	29 (20.7)	71 (50.7)	36 (25.7)	4 (2.9)
3	Few schools have equipped laboratory for practical works.	21 (15)	22 (15.7)	48 (34.3)	49 (35)
4	The schools have inadequate visual and audio-visual materials.	2 (1.4)	9 (6.4)	56 (40)	73 (52.1)
	Availability of Qualified Personnel				
5	Not all the schools have enough trained teachers.	26 (18.6)	90 (64.3)	20 (14.3)	4 (2.9)
6	Few teachers have higher degrees in specialises areas.	27 (19.3)	77 (55)	23 (16.4)	13 (9.3)
7	Teachers are not adequate for all the subjects offered.	17 (21.1)	57 (40.7)	53 (37.9)	13 (9.3)
8	The teachers put in enough time to teach.	39 (27.9)	87 (62.1)	10 (7.1)	4 (2.9)
	Government Commitment				
9	The Federal Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	12 (8.6)	95 (67.9)	25 (17.9)	8 (5.7)
10	The State Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	16 (11.4)	92 (65.7)	24 (17.1)	8 (5.7)
11	The Local Government is commitment to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria.	5 (3.6)	70 (50)	55 (39.3)	10 (7.1)
12	Education Officers and Directors of Area Education Authority visit schools on a regular basis.	23 (16.4)	62 (44.3)	39 (27.9)	16 (11.4)
	Enthusiasm of Teachers				
13	Teachers are eager to teach skills relevant to the functional literacy needs of the students.	16 (11.4)	68 (48.6)	44 (31.4)	12 (8.6)
14	Teachers work to ensure that students perform well in their examinations.	42 (30)	90 (64.3)	8 (5.7)	0 (0)
15	Teachers are always punctual and stays in school to assist students solve their personal and academic problems.	25 (17.9)	72 (51.4)	41(29.3)	2 (1.4)
16	Adequate assignments are given to test knowledge acquired from the lessons	36 (25.7)	99 (70.7)	5 (3.6)	0 (0)
	Enthusiasm of Students				
17	Student's enrolment in schools is quite high now.	18 (12.9)	80 (57.7)	37 (26.4)	5 (3.6)
18	Students are made to perform their given assignments.	19 (13.6)	96 (68.6)	22 (15.7)	3 (2.1)
19	Students try to be punctual at classes.	8 (5.7)	75 (53.6)	48 (34.3)	9 (6.4)
20	Students are made to stay in school to attend their lessons.	13 (9.3)	104 (74.3)	21 (15.0)	2 (1.4)

Table 3 indicates five broad areas and each was measured using four items. The result under adequacy of instructional materials showed that a total of 100 (71.4%) students agreed that the schools have adequate instructional material.

On availability of qualified personnel 106 (82.9%) students agreed that the schools had trained teachers, 104 (74.3%) agreed that most of the teachers had degrees in specialised areas. Also 73 (61.8%) agreed that the

schools have adequate teachers. Lastly, 126 (90%) agreed that the teachers put in enough time in teaching.

The students agreed that the Federal Government (107, 76.5%); the State Government (108, 77.1%) and the Local Government (75, 53.6%) were committed to implementing the Universal Literacy in Nigeria. Also, a total of 85 (60.7%) agreed that the Education Officers, Directors of Area Education Authority and Adult Education Agency officials visit the schools on a regular basis.

On enthusiasm of teachers a total of 84 (60%) students agreed that the teachers were always eager to teach and 132 (94.3%) agreed that the teachers work hard to see that the students perform well in their examination. A total of 97 (69.3%) agreed that the teachers are always punctual and stay in school to help students solve their academic problems. Lastly, 135 (96.4%) agreed that the teachers gave assignment to test knowledge acquired by the students.

Observation of responses on enthusiasm of learners showed that 98 (70.6%) students agreed that students enrolment was adequate, 115 (82.2%) agreed that the students were eager to do their assignments. Also 83 (59.3%) agreed that they students were always punctual in classes. Finally, a total of 117 (83.6%) agreed that students stay back in school to attain lessons.

Discussion of Results

On tables 2 and 3 results, both the teachers and the students were unanimous in their perception of inadequacy of instructional materials such as libraries, laboratories and visual aids in their schools for the implementation of the United Nations Universal Literacy and Nigeria's Universal Basic Education programme in Cross River State. Lack of instructional materials and adequately trained personnel in Nigeria's educational institution at all levels has equally been reported in similar studies and discussion by Arikpo, Tawo and Ojuah (2008: 11), Adeyemi (2007:160) and Dike (2002:5).

Adeyemi (2007: 160) for instance, reported that, since the inception of the UBE scheme in 1999, available infrastructural facilities, teaching and learning materials, as well as qualified teachers are perhaps grossly inadequate in schools. Arikpo et al. (2008:11) remarked that, lack of infrastructural materials and adequately trained vocational personnel in Nigeria's educational institutions is a serious problem that stands in the way of a successful implementation of both the UN MDGs and Nigeria's UBE programme. This situation is so serious that, Nneyelike (2008: 2) lamented concerning his sympathy with what the Nigerian students have to go through studying and making the best out of the system.

On commitment by Government towards the implementation of the UN Universal Literacy and Nigeria's UBE scheme, both the Federal, State and the Local Governments have put in much in terms of providing funds for the training of teachers and providing facilities in schools. This could be seen in the steps taken by different States Governments, for instance in Cross River State, the introduction of the Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP) by government was seen as a bold step in the right direction. This programme as outlined in a study by Tawo, Arikpo and Ojuah (2008) is aimed at providing in-service training to upgrade primary school teachers with Teacher's Grade 11 Certificate (TC11) to Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). This is in line with the Federal Government resolve of making NCE the minimum teaching qualification in the country by the year 2010.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the UBE programme is a laudable one, even if imposed on Nigeria, therefore it is a welcome development which Nigerians and indeed the Cross Riverians both as individuals and as a government shall have to take seriously in the interest of functional illiteracy eradication for self-reliance. The instructional material in Nigerian schools has been found to be quite inadequate. This state of affair does not augur well for the provision of functional literacy education intended in the mission objectives of both UN MDGs and Nigerian's UBE programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 The programmes should be regularly monitored by the facilitators.
- 2 Concerted effort should be made to provide enough funds in the budget of government and the UN and its related agencies for funding the programme adequately.
- 3 Vocational skills of Nigerian students should be vigorously developed along with liberal education skills through the provision of sufficient instructional materials like; school libraries, laboratories and audio visual aids to facilitate individualised instruction and functional literacy development.
- 4 Effort should be made to keep the students in the school as much as possible, so as to take them away from the peculiar circumstances identified with Nigerian rural families.
- 5 The personnel involved (teachers, administrators, policy makers and support staff) should be given regular training such as provided in seminars/ workshop so as to motivate them for better

performance.

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