

Impact Assessment of the Universal Basic Education Policy on School Enrolment in Selected Local Government Areas of Kwara State

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Abstract

Education no doubt has remained a potent tool for accelerating the progress of development of individuals and nations as a whole. In spite many attempts by governments at all levels (Federal, State and Local) to provide basic education to all children of school- going age, Millions of children of the poor are still been deprived of this basic right. This research was conducted to ascertain the extent to which U.B.E programme has created more access to basic education for children of school-age. The assumption of the study was that, the implementation of UBE programme has not created more access to basic education for children of school-age. Secondary data were mainly used; data collected were analyzed using tables, percentages and content analysis. The study found a progressive increase in the rate of enrolment; which implies that more school-age children were enrolled in the year under review. Gender disparity still remained steady, but insignificant because of the marginal difference (49% to 51%) in the rate of enrolment between boys and girls. It is however important to note that, inequality in education opportunity still exists, but there is a considerable improvement. This study recommends that, State and Local Government should establish more schools, build more classrooms to cater for the increasing number of prospective school-age pupils (students). The ongoing reform programme tagged “every child count” should also be given the necessary support by all stakeholders in the education sector.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Access, Policy, Enrolment.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a universal social phenomenon, which exist in every society. Despite this universality, education varies from society to society in terms of organization and goals (Edete, 1982:6). Education is imperative for the survival, growth and development of any society. For some decades now there has been (at least in principle) a global commitment to ensuring availability of basic education for all citizens (Wokocha, 2001:54).

In Britain, the education Act of 1944 guaranteed every citizen education that would be appropriate to his age, aptitude and ability for both elementary education and some years of secondary education (Wokocha, 2001:54). Education remains free and compulsory in Britain today for children between the ages 5-15 years. In the United State of America, although detailed policy on educations varies from state to state, primary education is free and compulsory in public schools. In Japan, primary education and the first three years of secondary education are currently free and compulsory. For African countries, the commitment to universal education is a lot more recent and has not been as consistent and coordinated as those of the developed countries for obvious social and economic reasons (Abioma, 2005:55).

As noted by Ajayi (2010, 118) The first attempt at implementing universal education scheme since the introduction of Western education in 1842 in Nigeria occurred on 17th January, 1955, under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the then premier of Western region. The universal primary education was launched throughout the region, and its introduction in the Eastern region in February, 1957, and in Lagos (then Federal Territory) in January, 1957. Other developments include the publication of a National Policy on Education in 1977, launching of universal free primary education by General Olusegun Obasanjo on the 6th September, 1976 and subsequent launch of universal Basic education programme by civilian regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th of September, 1999.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) pogramme is broader than Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme, which focuses only on provision educational opportunities to primary school-age children. Universal Basic Education(UBE) stressed the inclusion of girls and women and a number of underserved group: the poor, street and working children, rural and remote populations, nomads, migrant workers, indigenous workers, minorities, refuges and the disabled (Amenze, 2008:2).

Believing that education plays a crucial role in nation building, government decided to create nationwide, an educational system that would give every citizen a chance of developing his or her intellect and functional capabilities. The UBE policy is Nigeria’s strategy for the achievement of education for All (EFA) and twin issue of meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) of the United Nations, which set the target that, Universal Basic Education should be reached by 2015 as one among the eight (MDGs) goal. The UBE is also believed to be the Nigeria’s strategy for realizing the national economic agenda as envisaged by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

In pursuant to part iv section 12(1) and 13(1) of the Universal Basic Education Act 2004, which stipulates that, there shall be established for each State, a State Universal Basic Education Board and Local Government Education Authority, the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Law was enacted in 2005 to provide the legal framework for smooth takeoff of the UBE programme. Also, the state Universal basic Education Board was constituted to provide necessary institutional framework for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Universal Basic Education policy in the state. The Local Education Authority was re-organized for the successful implementation of the programme throughout the sixteen Local Government Areas in the State.

In spite of many attempts by governments at all levels to provide basic education for all children of school-age irrespective of gender, physical condition, geographical location, or socio-economic status of parents, there remained inequalities in access to basic education in Nigeria. The children of the poor are often seen in the markets and streets with young girls and boys hawking foods, pure water, oranges and bread. Girls were at greater disadvantage in getting access to education at the primary and secondary school-age.

The 2006 educational statistic data from the Federal Ministry of Education shows that only 14.1 million out of 21 million school-age children are enrolled in primary and junior secondary school, and an increase in the rate of school-age drops out rate. Girls were at greater disadvantage in getting access to education at the primary and secondary school-age (Habibu, 2011).

The 2008 national school census also revealed that, 19 percent of primary school-age children between 6 – 15 years were not enrolled in primary and junior secondary school nation-wide. Millions of poor school-age children are still been excluded from the processes and outcome of education. The Minister of Education Professor Ruqqayatu Rufa'i, on 3rd April, 2012 noted a disappointing picture of educational system as she revealed that over 10 million children are not in school.

The objectives of this study are:

- (i) To determine whether the implementation of Universal Basic Education policy has created more access to children of school age.
- (ii) To recommend better ways in which the Universal Basic Education policy could achieve its determined objectives.

This study assumed that, the implementation of UBE policy has not created more access to basic education for children of school-age in Offa and Irepodun Local Government area of Kwara State.

This study views Universal Basic Education as a social development tool which should not be taken for granted. And, the fact that children of school-age that were not in school pose a great danger to the community and the entire society (Habibu, 2011). Various studies have been conducted on UBE in areas of funding, implementation, challenges and prospect but no study has been conducted on a critical assessment of UBE policy most especially in the area under study.

This research was carried out with the hope that, it would fill the gap and give an insight into understanding of the extent of disparity in access to basic education, and states of school infrastructures in Kwara state. Also, the research of this nature was born out of the keen interest in the problem under study, educational related issues and the desire to contribute to body of knowledge. Moreover, this study would assist the school administrators and other stakeholders in educational sector i.e. UBEC officials, SUBEB, LGEAS staffs, parents, teachers Nongovernmental Organizations etc. In widen their knowledge, it is also expected that it would enrich the existing literature.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research methodology adopted in this study is analytical research method. Descriptive statistics and content analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the secondary source. This study made use of secondary data published by Kwara State Ministry of Education i.e Annual School Census Report 2010-2011, Education Sector Performance Report 2011 and Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009- 2018, 2010. Specifically, the study was conducted to ascertain the Impact of Universal Basic Education Policy on children enrolment in Irepodun and Offa Local government areas of Kwara State.

The time scope selected was 2006-2011. This period under review was selected because the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Law was enacted in 2005 in compliance with the UBE Act. The implementation of the Law started in 2006, now 6 years after (2006-2011). An assessment of the policy is deemed necessary to determine whether UBE has achieved its objectives.

In this study, Basic Education was restricted to first nine years of formal learning activities in conventional schools. The research data collected in these two Local Governments (one urban, one rural) is expected to be a true representation of all the Local Government in Kwara State.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Basic Education to United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (2001) quoted in Olagunju

(2006:101) is all forms of organized education and training, including to access to information to equip the individual to cope better with work and family responsibility and change the image of themselves. It is the education mean to meet the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults. The Nigeria basic education is to eradicate illiteracy and poverty as well as stimulate and acceleration national development, political consciousness and integration UBE, 2004.

The Nigerian UBE as asserted by Bamanja (2000) was conceive as a people's policy with a strong emphasis on all round peoples policy development of its beneficiary, with due attention to the intellectual and non- intellectual objective of education. It is an organized, multi-sect oral, community based education which consist of the acquisition of the skill of reading, written, numeracy, functional knowledge and generative basic education.

To Obanyan (2000) in Adepoju (2010) describes basic education as that level, type and form of learning needed to build firm roots for literacy and numeracy, to inculcate basic life skill and more importantly, to consolidate the skill of learning how to learn. According to the Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action for All, basic education is not defining in terms of years of schooling. It is not limited to formal schooling and Jegede (200) in Adenuola advocated for the non formal and informal media to work together complementary to ensure that all categories of Nigerians have access to basic education.

According to Naik (2006) cited in Aggarwal (2004:71) the progress of basic education is an index of the general, social and economic development of the country as a whole. And stressed further, that basic education plays an important role in laying the proper foundation of child's cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, social and spiritual development, and observed that basic education contributes immensely to national development. He affirmed that, various studies conducted have clearly demonstrated that countries which have proper provision for basic education are far ahead with those with inadequate provision.

Tagore in Venkateswaran (1993:80) was of the belief that, Basic education is a permanent part of the adventure of life. And that education should be natural in content and quality through contact with the nature the child will be introduced to the great world of really easily and joyfully. He further asserted that, basic education should not be shut off from the daily life of the people, and that, the higher mission of basic education is to help the child realize its full potentials.

It is important to point out that, all national progress depends upon mass education and a system of primary education that is open to all citizens as it's noted by Mahatma Gandhi (1921). The purpose of government continuous investment in basic education system in Nigeria (and indeed many least developed countries, LDCS) is to bridge the existing gap, and remove the differential in educational opportunities between the rich and the poor arising from social and economic inequalities.

Theoretical Framework

The theory upon which the study was anchored is Charles Lindblom Incremental theory of public policy. Charles Lindblom has been identified as the chief proponent of the incremental model. This is manifested in his "Decision Making in Taxation and expenditure in his description of budgetary process (Ngu, 2006:36). He and his disciple contended that policy making involves a continuation of past policies with very little and simple modification to suit new situation or changing circumstance, and posited the further, that policy does not require radical and drastic changes, but rather design to meet new challenges very slowly and progressively.

The Universal Basic Education, been a deliberate course of action by government, and an educational reform policy of the Nigerian government that provides free, compulsory, and continuous 9-year education in two levels: 6years of primary and 3years of Junior secondary education for all school-age children. This purposeful cause of action can thus, be understood within the context of distributive public policy.

Incremental model was adopted in this study to explain the underline factors responsible for changes in educational policy or a departure from past policies i.e Universal Primary Education Policy to Universal Basic Education Policy, which according to Charles; the changes or modification was meant to suit a new situation, and meet up with present challenges.

The premise of incremental policy, according Charles therefore entails gradual and minimal departure from status quo, and the superiority of incremental model over other model was centered largely on its respect for the past and it is skeptics. It is arguable that the defect noticed in the Universal Primary Education policy launched in 1976 necessitated the re-launch of the policy named Universal Basic Education Policy in September 1999, which has been found to be an improvement, and a continuation of the first policy in a slightly change form.

Goals and Objectives of UBE Policy

According to the UBE implementation guideline, the goals of the UBE policy are to universalize access to basic education, provide a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time. The specific objectives of the policy are to:

- i Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- ii Provide free, compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age.
- iii Reduce drastically drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
- iv Cater for drop-out and out of school children adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- V Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skill (as well as the ethical, moral and civic value) needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning.

Components of the UBE Programme

There are three components of the UBE scheme, namely:

- i. Formal basic education encompassing the first nine years of schooling (primary and junior secondary education) for all children.
- ii. Nomadic education for school age children of pastoral nomads and migrant fishermen.
- iii. Literacy and non-formal education for out of school children, youth illiterate adults.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION FINDINGS

This section contains results and discussion of findings. The tables below shows basic Statistics about the two Local Governments, and rate enrolments into Pre-primary, primary and Junior Secondary levels which was further classified based on gender. Data collected were summarized and interpreted using tables and descriptive statistics.

Table 3.1 Showing Basic Statistics about Irepodun and Offa Local Government

Local Governments	Irepodun	Offa
Number of Schools	69	43
Number of Teachers	1,044	869
Pupil per Teacher	15	14
Pupil classroom Ratio (Pre-primary & primary)	35	51
Pupil Classroom Ratio (Junior Secondary)	25	53

Source: Kwara State Annual School Census Report, 2010-2011 and Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009-2018, 2010.

Table 3.2 Summary of Enrolment in Public and Private Schools in Irepodun Local Govt. (Between 2006 - 2011)

Year	2006 – 2007			2007 – 2008			2008 – 2009			2009 - 2010			2010 -2011		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	2,720	2,610	5,330	2,770	2,731	5,501	2,829	2,832	5,661	3,001	2,907	5,908	3,150	3,031	6,163
Primary	6,507	6,320	12,827	6,681	6,418	13,099	6,676	6,513	13,189	6,898	6,651	13,549	7,037	6,837	13,874
Junior Sec.	2,454	2,378	4,832	2,534	2,683	5,217	3,048	3,060	6,108	3,095	3,156	6,251	3,183	3,271	6,454

Source: Extracted from Kwara State Annual School Census Report, 2010-2011 and Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009- 2018.

From table 3.1 above, the total number of pupil's enrolled into pre-primary and primary school increased by 113percent (from 2720 to 6163) and (6,507 to 13,824). The junior school enrolment increased by 33.5 percent (from 4,832 to 6454) between 2006 to 2011. The table also shows that 59.9percent (16,266 out of 27,150) pupils were enrolled in public schools, while the remaining 40.1percent were enrolled into various levels in private schools within the Local government. Gender disparity remains at 51percent for boys and 49percent for girls.

Table 3.3 Summary of Enrolment in Public and Private Schools in Offa Local Govt. (Between 2006 - 2011)

Year	2006 – 2007			2007 – 2008			2008 – 2009			2009 - 2010			2010 -2011		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	3,925	3,814	7,739	4,023	3,965	7,988	4,065	4,043	8,108	4,205	4,181	8,386	4,347	4,369	8,716
Primary	8,563	8,527	17,09	8,720	8,784	17,504	9,020	8,875	17,895	9,174	9,036	18,21	9,293	9,250	18,538
Junior Sec.	3,012	2,938	5,950	3,076	3,019	6,095	2,970	3238	6,208	3,002	3,311	6,313	3,149	3,425	6,574

Source: Extracted from Kwara State Annual School Census Report, 2010-2011.

From table 3.1 above, the total number of pupil's enrolled into pre-primary and primary school increased by 12percent (from 7,739 to 8,716) and 8.5percent (17,090 to 18,538). The junior school enrolment increased by 10.5 percent (from 5,950 to 6,574) between 2006 to 2011. The table also shows that in year 2011, 59.2percent (20,046 out of 38,828) pupils were enrolled into various levels in public schools, while the remaining 40.1percent were enrolled into various levels in private schools within the Local government. Gender disparity remain steady at 51percent for boys and 49 percent for girls at pre-primary and primary school level but increased to 54percent for boys and reduced to 46 percent for girls they transit to higher classes(most especially the junior secondary level).

Based on the data presented and interpreted above, the study found that:

- Since the commencement of implementation of the UBE policy, there has been a sustained progression in the rate of enrolment into pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school level, which signifies an improvement in access to basic education in Irepodun and Offa Local Governments area of Kwara State.
- The progression in the enrolment rate was found to be in favour of private schools more than public schools.
- The gender disparity between boys and girls at pre-primary and primary level were insignificant (49 % to 51%) but, widen as the pupils transit to junior secondary school level.
- Available data published by the Kwara State Ministry of Education revealed that, there is reduction in the rate of school dropout since inception of UBE policy; attributable to the implementation of the state education reforms' policy under UBE tagged" Every child count".
- This study also noticed various reforms measures been carried out to reposition the basic education sector in the State.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Universal basic Education Policy was conceived to cater for primary and junior secondary education, nomadic, special and adult education .the policy was launched by government of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and accelerate national progress, hence national integration. It aimed at providing free and compulsory universal basic education for children of school-age irrespective of sex, age, geographical location and economic status of parent, thereby reducing drastically the incidence of school dropout.

In conclusion, Education can not only be seen as a right, but a necessary condition for the exercise of other rights Access to basic education in Kwara state still remain unequal but appreciable success has been achieved since the commencement of the implementation of UBE policy. Considering the rate of enrolment before UBE and now, it is pertinent to note that people most especially parents has graciously accepted the need for their children to be educated, thereby avoiding any hindrance their children's educational pursuit. Looking at attitude and the willingness of government to provide basic education for all citizens, we conclude that the commitment of government to ensure unfettered access to quality basic education for children of school going-age is highly commendable. However, commitment of government towards teachers' welfare and training needs to be improved upon in other to achieve the objective of UBE and Education for All (EFA) target. This paper recommends that:

- State and Local Government should establish more schools, build more classrooms and provide more instructional materials to cater for the increasing number of prospective school-age pupils (students).
- With UBE now getting close to ensuring accurate measurement of school enrolment, Kwara State urgently needs a school mapping exercise; combine with a review of the system of hiring and allocation of teachers to Government owed schools.
- To actualize the Education For All target, the State government, Local Government and in collaboration with other stakeholder should assist in provision of basic health care services, transportation facilities for children that have to cover long distance
- The ongoing reform policy tagged "every child count" should also be given the necessary support by

all stakeholders in the education sector.

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