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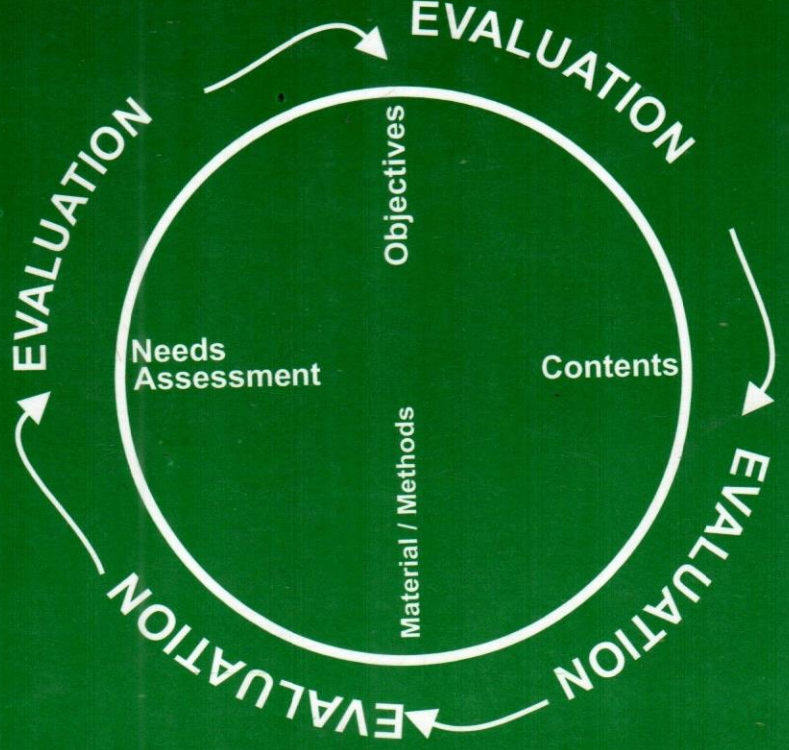

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Challenges of Universal Basic Education Curriculum Implementation: a hindrance to Corruption Free Nigeria

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Abstract
Education is the avenue through which social ills such as; illiteracy, insecurity, corruption, etc. can be minimized or eradicated in society. Having realized this, the governments of nations of the world and Nigeria in particular have at different times initiated some education programmes and policies to ensure that these issues that are gradually taking roots in society are uprooted. For instance, the Nigerian government initiated the Universal Primary Education programme in 1976 as a tool to tackle the problem of illiteracy and others but this noble education programme could not achieve its goals due to poor implementation process. As a government that does not rest on its oars, it has in 1999 launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme with a well loaded and structured curriculum to achieve the objectives of this scheme and by extension help the Nigerian nation achieve a corruption free society (which is the cardinal policy thrust of this present administration). This paper therefore, looked at the concept of the UBE meaning of corruption and the Nigerian society, the teacher and the Universal Basic Education Curriculum Implementation, the challenges of implementing the UBE curriculum, conclusion and the way forward

Keywords; curriculum, Universal Basic Education, corruption and curriculum implementation

Introduction

Curriculum is the compass that gives direction and focus to education at all levels. This is so because not only that it contains the needs, aspirations and the goal of education of a people, it also stands between education and the learner. In

other words, curriculum is the conveyor of the culture of the people from one generation to another. Conveying of this culture from one generation to another will be difficult or impossible without basic education. Basic Education is the means through which any individual can achieve his/her goals in education. Realizing the importance of basic education in the life of any society has given rise to many definitions from scholars and government itself. For instance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN: 2004), described it as the key to success or failure of the whole education system(Obih, Azubuike and Obi; 2014), conceptualized the Universal Basic Education (UBE) as an educational programme aimed at universalizing access to and ensure quality in basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.

Having perceived that basic education is the key towards eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty, the then president of Nigeria chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, launched the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. Universal Basic Education (UBE) as launched by Obasanjo has a lot to do in the life of every Nigerian child. For example, Ejere (2011), observed that the main thrust of the UBE programme is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills. Obanya as cited by Osam (2015), opined that the UBE programme is founded on Nigeria's adherence to the Universal declaration on human rights of 1948, which takes universal access to Basic Education as given.

To ensure that the Universal Basic Education programme does not end up as a mere paper work, the government according to Ejere (2011), in 2008 (9 years after the UBE policy scheme was launched) un-veiled a new Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) to support her readiness in fully pursuing and accomplishing the objectives of UBE programme. Unarguably, despite how good the objectives or content of the UBE curriculum may be, without implementation its aim will be defeated. Therefore, the teacher is very pivotal in the implementation of the curriculum. To confirm the above position, Osam (2013), described the teachers as the prime executors of government policies on education. He further declared that teachers are fundamental resources to the development of the school system. This being said means that the failure of the teacher in implementing the curriculum will result to the failure of the UBE programme and this may breed corruption and other social ills in the society. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to look at those challenges of UBE curriculum implementation that can impede the achievement of corruption free society as discussed below.

Corruption and the Nigerian Society

Corruption is an evil wind that has blown sand and dust into the eyes of many nations of the world, both developed and developing countries. According to

Stefan-Sumah (2018), who researched on the phenomenon and its negative impacts have become more common in 1995 when countries and international institutions began to be aware of this problem. This means the attitude of people to corruption before 1995 was neutral. But this does not mean there was no corruption before 1995. Due to the evils that are associated with corruption, many definitions have been given to it. Transparency International (TI) for instance, has defined corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Also, Ademihu cited by Ogbonnanya (2018), quoting the World Bank website, describes corruption as the single most important obstacle to development it is a subversive face that can topple the most entrenched regimes, it connotes currencies, markets and investments. From the definitions above, one thing that is common is that corruption should not be accommodated because it has affected many countries and institutions negatively.

Nigeria is one of these countries that corruption has attacked. It has permeated all sectors of Nigerian economy, institutions like; schools, religious bodies, etc. Corruption in Nigeria has taken different forms. For example Obayelu (2007) says different vocabularies used to describe corruption and typology of corruption in Nigerian society include; bribery, extortion (money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence of threats), embezzlement (theft of public resources by public officials), financial malpractices, egunje, dash, gratifications, brown envelops, tips, emoluments, greasing softening the ground, inducements, sub-payments, facilitation payments, mobilization fees, revised estimate, padded contracts, over or under invoicing, cash commission, kickbacks, payoffs exchanges, shading deals, cover-ups, collusion, 10% rule. These are the forms of corruption in Nigeria. In the same vein, the different types of corruption according to Tolu and Ogunro (2012) are as follows; moral corruption, economic corruption, political and bureaucratic corruption and electoral corruption. All these forms and types of corruption have brought a lot of negative consequences to economies and especially the emerging economies like Nigeria. A working paper of the International Monetary Funds (IMF) shows that corruption has an adverse impact on the quality of education and healthcare provided in countries with emerging economies. Corruption increases the cost of education, it influences the mode of teachers' recruitment and promotion. This, as a result has impacted on the quality of education. Corruption has also, affected the allocation of resources to the various sectors and institutions of countries and the worst case being that it has lowered the standard of living of people and resulted in many avoidable deaths. It is also, not unconnected with the insecurity, smuggling, nepotism, sectionalism, dishonesty, killings etc that are being witnessed in

Nigeria today. In summary, corruption has brought Nigeria to its knees and therefore must be tackled head long.

As a result of these negative impacts of corruption on the economy of Nigeria, government has made frantic efforts to stamp out corruption and give the people a new lease of life and shore up her image among the comity of nations. For instance, the government has established some anti-corruption agencies like; the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the independent corruption practices of other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATT), Public Service Reform and lately the National Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU). All these anti-corruption agencies were formed to enable Nigeria as a country fight and forestall the negative consequences of corruption in the country but unfortunately, corruption is not abetting. For example according to Transparency International (IT), Nigeria's position on the global corruption perception index has not improved. Out of 100 points, Nigeria scored 27 points. Transparency International further revealed that still on the corruption index, Nigeria averaged 20.76 points from 1996 until 2018, reaching all time high of 28 points in 2016 and a record low of 6.90 points in 1996. It should be noted that all these anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria apply force as their modus operandi. This could be the reason these agencies are not achieving the desired results. Therefore, it has become imperative at this point to use education as a tool to conquer the menace of corruption in Nigeria and UBE appears to be favoured.

Universal Basic Education Programme

Basic Education is the education given to children aged (0-15 years). It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early child care and Development Education is structured, thus; ages 0-4 years shall be in day care or crèches, fully in the hands of private sector and social development services, and ages 5-6 years (pre-primary) are within the formal education sector. For effective policy coordination and monitoring the Federal Government came-up with the following objectives:

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

b) The provision of compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;

c) Reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;

d) 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

e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning FRN,2013:5).

To ensure easy or effective coordination of this basic education programme, the government structured it thus;

- 1 year of pre-primary
- 6 years of primary
- 3 years of junior secondary education. From this structure government was guided to form the curriculum for the universal basic education to actualize the already proposed objectives.

The curriculum of the universal basic education has been structured as follows;

- Lower Basic Education Curriculum for primary 1-3
- Middle Basic Education Curriculum for Primary 4-6
- Upper Basic Education Curriculum for junior secondary 1-3(FRN, 2013:6).

The point that should be noted here is that the Universal Basic Education curriculum for the upper Basic (JSS 1-3) serves as a link between the primary (lower and middle Basic) and the senior secondary (1-3) otherwise known as the Post Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD). This is necessary and also commendable because for a child who has successfully completed 6 years of primary schooling and 3 years of upper basic, he/she will not find it difficult to cope at the senior secondary level. On the other hand, for a child who completed his/her basic education and does not wish to continue, he/she will not be frustrated by the challenges of the world of work. The reason being that the child would have acquired those basic skills of life.

The curricular of the three (3) strata of Universal Basic Education according to FRN (2013:10) are as follows;

Lower Basic Education (Primary 1-3): English studies, one Nigerian language, mathematics, Basic science and technology (Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information, Technology, Physical and Health Education), Religion and National values (Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, Security Education).

Middle Basic Education (Primary 3-6): English studies, one Nigerian language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology (Basic science, Basic

Technology, Information Technology, Physical and Health Education), Religion and National values (Christian Religious studies, Islamic studies, civic education, social studies, security education), pre-vocational studies (Home Economics, Agriculture), French Language, Cultural and Creative Arts, Arabic (optional).

Upper Basic Education (Junior Secondary School): English Studies, one Nigerian Language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology (Basic science, Basic Technology, Information Technology, Physical and Health Education) Religion and National Values (Christian Religious Studies, Islamic studies, social studies, Civic Education, Security Education), pre-vocational studies (Home Economics, Agriculture), French Language, Cultural and creative Arts, Business studies, Arabic (optional).

It should be noted that these subjects that make up the curricular at the Universal Basic Education level are divided into core, compulsory and electives. For example, at the JSS level, the core subjects are; English studies, mathematics, Basic Science, Basic Technology, social studies, civic education, one major Nigerian language, cultural and creative arts, religious studies, physical and Health Education, French language and computer studies ICT. The elective subjects are; agriculture, Arabic Home Economics and Business studies. It should be observed that the subjects and content from lower Basic to Upper Basic, were systematically arrange to ensure that they link to one another. One important thing that is understandable is that to ensure that the learners at this basic education level have a considerable grasp of the content, the curriculum and content for these 9-years are thematically arranged.

The Teacher and the Universal Basic Education Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is all the efforts made within the school system to interpret and bring to reality the content of the curriculum by using all the available resources (human and material resources). Both effectiveness or otherwise of any curriculum cannot be establish until it is implemented. To implement the curriculum the teacher plays a pivotal role. He is the key to the success or failure of any education system. According to Edun in Osam (2015), no education system can function without teachers. This is why the teacher is perceived as an indispensable resource of any school system that wishes to succeed. At the basic or the foundation level the teacher is an invaluable asset because he lays the foundation upon which any other level of education is built. For the effectiveness of the teacher to be ensured therefore, he will have to be equipped for the job. The teacher can be equipped by making sure he gets the

right type of training and also be guided by the professional ethics.

The Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria and even elsewhere cannot be fully and effectively implemented without competent and qualified teachers. Also, in a situation where there are competent and qualified teachers and these teachers are not enough, the Universal Basic Education cannot be effectively and fully implemented and this may hamper the achievement of the objectives of the programme. Unfortunately, it is very disheartening to observe that years after this programme was started, we still have many unqualified teachers who are implementing the UBE curriculum in many schools (Junaid as cited by Nwokeocha 2013). These teachers do not have the knowledge and skills that are required for them to be there. Another important perspective from which the implementation of the UBE curriculum can be looked at according to Junaid as cited by Nwokeocha (2013), is that there is shortfall in the quantity of teachers at the Basic Education level.

The shortfalls are in the following area of the UBE:

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCD) –	969,078
Primary Education	338,147
Junior Secondary	581,000
Adult and Non-Formal	1,580,000
Nomadic Education	12,329
Total	**3,480,554**

Source: Roadmap for the Nigerian Education sector (Junaid cited by Nwokeocha, 2013).

From the foregoing, it is an incontrovertible fact that the Universal Basic Education programme was conceived and given birth to with many promising objectives which if achieved can help the youth in particular and the economy of our country in general. However, to achieve these objectives the government should not spare any effort in the production and recruitment of teachers who do not only have the passion and calling but who also are committed in raising youths who will possess the right types of values, skills, discipline and attitudes that will enable them to survive this very competitive global economy.

Challenges of Implementing the UBE Curriculum

In a very simple and concise term, challenges of implementing the curriculum refer to those things that are likely to hinder or distort the implementation of the UBE curriculum. They include the following:

1. The Teacher

In any school system, the teacher to some great extent holds the key to its success or failure. This is why the teacher is important in the system. The UBE programme covers from pre- primary to junior secondary school 3. At the

primary school level, one teacher teaches or is expected to teach all the subjects on the timetable even when he/she is not trained to do so. In this context the teacher suffers from extra-workload and this, results to inefficiency on the part of the teacher. In other words, the teacher will not be able to plan or prepare his/her lesson and teach it effectively. Another aspect to this is that at the teachers' training institutions teachers at the primary school level, are trained to specialize in one subject area therefore, if a situation arises where the teacher is expected to teach any or those subjects that he/she does not have any knowledge of, the curriculum will suffer some implementation problem. For example, if a teacher that specializes in Social Studies is employed to teach in primary school, such teacher will find it difficult to handle Primary Science simply because that is not his/her area of specialization. At this point the teacher may not choose the right teaching methods, the right learning experiences, right evaluation procedures. Furthermore, at the JSS (upper basic) level, many of the teachers especially in private schools are employed to teach subjects they did not receive any training for at the training institution. For instance, it is the common practice to see someone who studied chemistry Physics or even Biology in school teaching Integrated Science or Agricultural Science etc., a graduate of Economics or Political Science teaching English Studies at the JSS level. This, constitutes a big challenge to the effectiveness expected on the part of the teacher as regards the UBE curriculum implementation. Also, it should be borne in mind that the UBE level (especially primary 1 to 6) is the foundational stage and if we fail to get it right at this point, our entire education system is already on the line and this potends a great danger to the survival of the Nigeria society.

2. Problem of coordinating the two arms of UBE

Before the launching of the UBE programme and the introduction of the 9-year curriculum for the UBE programme, the education system in Nigeria ran thus: primary 1-6 and JSS 1-3 SS 1-3. However, following the launching of the UBE and the subsequent introduction of the new 9-year curriculum for the basic education, JSS 1-3 were disarticulated from the hitherto secondary school arrangement to join the basic education programme. One may guess the reason for this was to ensure or engender effective and efficient co-ordination of the UBE programme. But it is disheartening to observe at this point that many years down the lane, the coordination of the two arms of UBE programme still poses a big problem to the managers of the UBE. The primary arm of the UBE is under the control of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), while the Junior Secondary is under the control of secondary Education Board (Osam 2015). He further noted that the two boards may be working with the same zeal and vision which may run contrary to the realization of the UBE goals. The

Conclusion

To eradicate corruption in Nigeria, education is the key. For example in some of the developed economies of the world like, the USA, UK, Japan, Germany, etc, their literacy level is high and this has influenced positively the way they do things and by extension reduced the level of corruption in their land. So, Nigeria can follow suit by making sure that all the likely challenges to effective and efficient implementation of the Universal Basic Education Curriculum (UBEC) such as, poor funding, teacher-students ratio problem, recruitment of unqualified teachers, poor infrastructural facilities, etc are nipped in the board. If this is done, the corruption free society mantra of the current administration at the federal level will be achieved.

Way forward

The following are the suggested way forward;

1. There should be adequate funding of the UBE programme by the government.
2. Government should provide enough infrastructural facilities in schools such as, classroom blocks, libraries, laboratories.
3. The recruitment of teachers for the UBE programme should be purely on merit because experience has shown that some of the teachers in the system do not have any business being there.
4. Funds that are disbursed for UBE programme should be monitored to ensure they are used for the purpose they are meant.
5. UBE teachers should be meant to enjoy some incentives like; car loans, free housing, etc.
6. Government should support UBE teachers through scholarship, in-service training, going for seminars and conferences, etc.

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