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IMPLEMENTATION OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL TO UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Omeje Ngozi Priscilla

*Department of Public Administration
Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria.
E-mail: ngoziomeje33@gmail.com*

Ogbu Mark Obioma

*Department of Public Administration
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria
email:makekeh2000@gmail.com*

Abstract

The abridged execution of most policies in Nigeria necessitated this study which assessed the Implementation of Millennium Development Goal 2-adopted as Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria. The paper therefore wants to identify the obstacles standing against the actualization of the programme as the 2015 target set by the United Nation Organization for its member states is almost at hand and also proffer solutions. It however discovered that there are recorded cases of inadequate classroom blocks for the students and lack of other school equipment and facilities in the public schools. Also the teachers whose positions are crucial to the implementation of the programme have not been adequately motivated to enhance their productivity. The implications remains that the actualization of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme objectives will be thwarted as there would be increase in student's dropout from formal school system and decline of parents zeal to enroll their children into public schools. Recommendation was made that Nigerian government should commit adequate funds to the programme; improve on her supervisory roles and motivate the teachers.

Introduction

This programme which is a national policy on education was born out of some events. Since the introduction of Western education in 1842, regions, states and federal government in Nigeria have shown keen interest in education. This could be seen in the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Western region on 17th January 1955, its introduction in the Eastern region in February 1957 and in Lagos (the then Federal Territory) in January 1957. Earlier in 1984 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that everyone has the right to education. Over forty (40) years, it is clear that many people are still being denied this basic human right. It was at that point that a world conference on education for all was held in Jomtien, Thailand, for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide basic education for all. In 1996, the International Development Targets (IDTs) were set. This declaration commits United Nations member states to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. It was during the United Nations Millennium summit in September 2000 that the Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 nations and was signed by 147 heads of states and governments to respond to the world's development challenges.

Otoghagua (2007) stated that the Millennium Development Goals are also the main thrusts of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDs). The Federal government of Nigeria through her National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy embraced the Goals 2 target.

Therefore NEEDs in respect to Goals 2 seeks to:

- a. Reduce the number of unqualified primary school teachers by 80 percent.
- b. Mobilize community and private sector involvement in education and
- c. Enhance completion of Universal Basic Education Programme.

The Universal Basic Education Programme in its goals aims at the provision of conducive learning environment for Nigerians and also the eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time.

Data from the Federal Ministry of Education, Education statistics (1996) showed that Nigeria's literacy rate was 5² percent. In 199⁸; only 40 percent of all heads of households in Nigeria had any education at all, 21 percent had only primary education, 14 percent had up to secondary education while only 5 percent had post-secondary education. Also that only 14.¹ million out of 21 million school-age children are enrolled in primary school. The Universal Basic Education Programme was born from these startling statistics, to promote education among all citizens. It is so to say in this circumstance that Universal Basic Education simply builds upon the education policies of 1976-Universal Primary Education introduced by Obasanjos' military regime to eradicate illiteracy, develop and Enhance adequate needs of the Nigerian economy. It was later on 30th September 1999 that President Olusegun Obasanjo formally launched universal

Basic Education that is broader than the earlier universal Primary Education. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is of nine (9) years duration comprising six (6) years of Primary Education and three (3) years of Junior Secondary Education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non-formal education. Programmes at Primary and Junior Secondary Education levels for the adults and out of school youths. The schools feeding program was also introduced by the government to provide food to children while in school as a way of boosting the Universal Basic Education.

The programme also stresses the inclusion of girls and women and a number of underserved groups: the poor, street and working children, rural and remote population, nomads, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees and the disabled. The formal education system is only one of six components included in basic education in the implementation guidelines of the federal government. Others relate to early childhood, literacy and life skills for adults, nomad population, and non-formal education or apprenticeship training for youth outside the formal education system.

Generally, in Nigeria, education is *provided* for by the Federal, State and Local Governments. This has resulted in education to be tailored to suit the socio-economic circumstances of individual federating units. For example, in certain regions, nomadic education operates as a variant for primary education. Islamic and Koranic school have also become integrated into the formal basic education system. The Universal Basic Education Act 2004 provides the legal framework for the programme.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The implementation of the laudable provisions and objectives of the UBE Programme seems not to be yielding positive result. Evident in most of the public schools in Nigeria are inadequate and decays of school equipment and facilities. There are pathetic cases in several public schools with partial roof on their buildings. Most parents are pulling their children out from public schools with the preference of schools that are privately managed. They have come to believe that education is not practically free as a result of the various fees collected from their children. It has been observed that many children of School age have been seen during school hours in various motor parks, road sides and markets, hawking various goods for their parents and *relatives*.

Also there have been reported cases of teacher's threats to strikes and actual strike in public schools as a result of teacher's agitations for good salary packages and accumulated unpaid salaries. It is also a problem that corruption is found in our educational institutions particularly secondary schools, primary and even in adult education centers. Bribes are freely given and freely taken before services are rendered, all which have constrained the smooth implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The "Goal Setting theory propounded by Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, in 1968 was considered suitable for this paper. Onah (2008) notes on the contribution of the Goal Setting Theory that "employees can be motivated by goals that are specific and challenging but achievable". Therefore, the best way to motivate performance is to set the right objectives in the right ways.

Three elements that were identified in this theory are:

- 1) That goals should be specific which implies that it must not be too vague but be

detailed.

- 2) That goals should be challenging, meaning that goals set for employees to attain must be career rewarding and motivational which would compel workers to focus their attention in the right place putting as well more efforts in their jobs to bring about higher performances.
- 3) Also that goals should be unattainable by making its provisions unrealistic. That employers should make sure that their workers have additional training if necessary to achieve difficult goals.

Its provisions of specific challenging and achievable goals and objective addresses the challenges facing the actualization of the goals and objectives of the Universal Basic Education Programme generally in Nigeria.

Otoghagua (2007), identified the following to be the goals of UBE:

- i) Provision of universal access of Nigerians to free basic education.
- ii) Provision of a conducive learning environment for Nigerians.
- iii) Eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time.

Therefore, the theory applies as a guide for analyzing and predicating the issues under investigation. The implementation of the UBE Programme would be actualized in the event of well set goals which must be detailed, motivational and achievable under a time frame.

Conceptual Review

Programme Implementation

Egonwan (1991), defined Implementation as "the stage where the preparation made earlier, the plans, designs and analysis proposed are tested to see how real they are". The above definition suggests that it is mainly action to translate the proceeding thought process into concrete reality. The activities directed towards putting a programme into effect. It is also the process of carrying out an objective of a plan. For example, if a State Governor decides to build a school for a community in his state, its actual implementation will involve building classroom blocks, library, laboratories, office blocks and sports grounds; also, the posting of teachers, procurement of equipment; books and stationery and admittance of students to get the school going. Also, the implementation of a policy on free funding of primary education would involve paying salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff, procurement of textbooks, stationery as well as teaching materials for distribution to schools and students. Implementation confirms in reality an objective of a plan.

This is to say that policy implementation is the carrying out of the policy formulated in concrete terms. It is the programme implementation stage. The policy implementation stage comes after a policy has been made operational through the passing of legislation. Implementation becomes possible when resources have been committed to it. In Onah (2006: 15), he stated that: This stage of the project (programme) cycle involves the performance of the core activities which lead directly to the realization of the project (programme activities. The major activities in this phase include the preparation of implementation schedules, inter-sectorial co-ordination, budgeting breakdown, procurement, supervision of operations and monitoring of methods and progress.

Policy is made by the presidents, legislators, judges, interest groups and special panels but

executed by administrators, just like the educational policy of Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP) made somewhere but executed by administrators in the system. Policy implementation stage depends on some factors, which according to Barret and Fudge (1981), include "knowing what you want to do and the availability of the required resources". This stage requires awareness of and sensitivity to political, social, economic and physical forces. The environment is complex and changing and it is impossible to predict all projects impacts due to environment.

All these suggest that at the policy implementation stage, because of the scarcity of resources, other priority needs can come up to compete and influence the implementation of a particular programme.

Problems of Implementation and Management of Public Programmes in Nigeria

Ogbonnaya (2003: 55), writes that: Over-ambitious policy goals, cultural consideration, political opposition during implementation, inadequate personnel in some areas, inadequate funds, bribery and corruption, lack of continuity in commitment to policy and poor supervision has been the problems facing the implementation of educational programmes in Nigeria.

Each of the identified problems is hereby reviewed.

Firstly on the problem of over-ambitious policy goals, most public policies or programmes are over-ambitious and very sweeping in nature. A good example is the "free education at all levels"-a policy pursued by the Unity Party of Nigeria during the second republic. This policy could not be executed successfully largely because of inadequate resources. Just similar to the objectives of Operation Feed the nation (OFN) of 1976 and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of 1999 which were laudable, just like a light on the chessboard will face a different direction while it tracks on the other way. Their plans have unclear and multiple goal characteristics with many objectives and unspecific goals. They could not work out.

Ogbonnaya, (2003) similarly noted that "some educational policies in Nigeria are over-ambitious. The Universal Primary Education Scheme of 1976 could not be continued because of inadequate resources.

Secondly, on the problem of cultural consideration Ogbonnaya (2003) rightly observed that "in the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria, cultural consideration prevents the adoption of modern technology in many areas of programmes". Courses like family planning and nutrition education have failed because of cultural beliefs. Many parents discourage and in fact do warn their children about receiving lessons or lectures on family planning practices. It is on record that some parents either write letters to school authorities or withdraw their children from schools who teach subjects or topics on family planning. Parents advise their children against certain type of foods.

Thirdly, on the problem of political opposition during implementation Ogbonnaya (2003: 56), writes that: Many educational policies and programme in Nigeria face oppositions during implementation. This has been the case when Federal Government wants to site some Federal Public Schools because some states felt that these institutions should be established in their own states or areas.

The free education policy of the then Unity Part of Nigeria also faced a lot of opposition from some people who felt that their states could not carry it. So we find a lot of resistance of all sorts from different groups, individuals and organizations, and even from political elites.

Fourthly, on the identified problem of inadequate personnel, it widely impedes the

implementation of educational policies and programmes. In November 1999 summit on how to successfully prosecute the UBE Scheme as, was reported in Implementation Guidelines for the Universal Basic Education Programme (2000), professor Olu Aina raised a question about how the government can provide yearly 300,000 teachers as required by the Universal Basic Education Programme. As at then, according to him, of the sixty-two (62) colleges of education students in the universities are of very low percentage. His fear was how to satisfy the demand considering the output ratio of education teachers *available*. There are presently, inadequate personnel in areas of computer engineering and operations research. So the implementation of policies in the area of computer Engineering is hampered.

Fifthly, on the problem that arises as a result of lack of provision and allotment of funds, Ogbonnaya (2003) emphasized that "Inadequate funds hamper the implementation of educational programmes". The Universal Primary Education Scheme failed because of inadequate funds. Many projects like construction of hostels, and libraries in many public schools *have* not been completed because of inadequate funds. There are cases of dilapidated infrastructures in public schools in many states. We find broken roofs, broken floors, hanging windows and doors. These facilities are this way because of lack of funds.

The successful implementation of educational policies in Nigeria depends on adequate financial support. State governments fund secondary schools and the Primary Education Board is responsible for the management of primary schools through the local government education authorities for the payment teacher's salaries, rehabilitation of classrooms blocks and other miscellaneous expenses.

In some states of the federation, teachers are owed arrears of salaries and allowances up to six months. In Nigeria, government grants constitute a major source of funding to education. Adesina in Mgbodile (2003: 199) stated that: Government grants fall under Capital and Recurrent grants. Capital and Recurrent grants represent a bulk payment to the authorities of an educational institution for the erection of new buildings, major repairs of old ones, the purchase of hardware, school equipment and payment of staff salaries and allowances. School fees constitute another major source of funds for the Nigerian educational system. School fees include tuition fees, dormitory or hostel fees, caution deposits, and insurance fees. These fees are paid into the account units or bursary departments of various educational institutions. The bursary of each school pays the money collected into the government accounts. Other identified sources of revenue to education are: Proceeds from school activities; Community efforts; Donations from individuals and Charity organization; Endowment funds and External aids. Ndu et al (1997: 167), writing on the above issue, states that:

The financial resources allocated to the education sector in Nigeria depends on a number of factors namely: the rate of growth of the national economy, the condition of the world market, the competition of other sectors of the economy and the nature of the sources of revenue for education. His view suggests that the financial resources allocated to the education sector also depend on the condition of the world market. Nigeria depends mostly on oil revenue. Quite often, there are fluctuations in the price of oil in the world market which makes it difficult to decide what proportion of the national resources should go to education.

Therefore what is allocated to the education sector depends on the nature of the sources of revenue. A steady flow of buoyant income into the government's coffers is desirable if a substantial proportion of it is to go to education.

Sixthly, as Ogbonnaya (2003) identified, is the problem of bribery and corruption. He rightly observed that in Nigerian educational institutions, bribes are freely given and taken before services are rendered. Some parents give bribes to secondary school principals to have their children admitted in schools of their choice. Some teachers too give bribes to officials in the school board for preferential postings to school of their choice. Some teachers and even heads of schools have immoral dealings with female students. Some of them require money to give to WAEC invigilators so that they can be given the freedom to indulge in examination malpractices. He further stated that "it is on record that young female teachers corner some big boys in the schools they teach for sexual intercourse". Gratifications are paid before contracts are awarded in the public schools. When corruption penetrates into the implementation process, it becomes mutilated and its goals would not be achieved.

Seventhly, also is the problem of lack of continuity in commitment to policy. This occurs because regimes changes rapidly in Nigeria. These regimes have their priorities. Some of them are interested in infrastructures like building of roads and bridges. There are some others who are interested in the establishment of schools and hospitals. So priorities of government are changing rapidly. This fact tends to make implementation difficult because new government entirely switches over to new programmes. In the 1970s, there was the Modern Mathematics Programme. In 1976, there was the Universal Primary Education introduced by the Federal Government. Today, we now have the leading educational national policy Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP). Recently in November 2010, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced of its intention to close down all her existing Federal Colleges of Education.

Lastly, is the problem of poor supervision? This has been a major problem affecting the implementation of educational programmes and policies in Nigeria. It is obvious that the success of any good educational policy or plan depends to a great extent on the efficiency of the supervision machinery. Unfortunately, there are schools that have not received supervisors and inspectors for up to two years. It is also obvious that some projects like the construction of classroom blocks are not supervised by heads of educational institutions where such programmes are under way. Some contractors have made away with government funds and properly because they are not supervised by the ministry or the relevant agency.

Implications of the Problems to the Implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme

The governments inadequate provisions of classroom, libraries, laboratories, instructional materials and general school equipment and facilities for most of the public schools is not a good step in the right direction at implementing the objectives of the universal basic education programme.

Also, the poor conditions of the public schools have been the reason in recent times why most parents have refused to enrol their children into the public schools. A healthy conducive learning and at the same time promotes students pride in their school and their interest to study in school. Education facilities are needed for developing the cognitive area of knowledge abilities and skills which are pre-requisite for academic achievements.

The course of implementing the UBE programme - motivating the teachers of the public schools is another area the government have not taken seriously. This has manifested in delays in payment of teachers salaries, delays in their promotions, poor remunerations and exhibition of authoritarian attitude when dealing with the teachers. The implication would

be that teachers would not give their best. When they are dissatisfied with their job, they tend to withdraw physically from teaching or remain there to constitute serious danger to the educational policy goals. Where there is poor supervision of the implementation of the programme, it would be hard to monitor the various financial activities going on in public schools with regards to the fees collected from the students hence would not guarantee the actualization of the objectives of the programme but would rather turn the students off from acquiring the Universal Basic Education which was spelt out in its provisions to be free.

Conclusion

Based on the deductions made from the concept of programme implementation in relation to the UBE programme objectives, the implementation cannot be guaranteed without the government adequate financial support. Implementation *can* only become possible when resources have been committed. The recorded cases of dilapidated infrastructures inadequate and total lack of classroom in most public schools in Nigeria are because of lack of funds. There is a positive relationship between the academic performance of pupils in schools with the availability and the nature of the physical facilities and equipment.

Among the various approaches and strategies clearly spelt out by the USE scheme for the successful implementation, much and full attention has not been devoted to adequate teacher's motivation and regular supervision or monitoring of the scheme.

It has been widely believed that the teacher's rewards are in heaven. The teachers are the critical factor in any effort aimed at boosting quality education. It is clear that when they are not adequately motivated, would become disinterested and dispirited to embark on self development but would rather engage in other economic ventures an illegal activity in schools that would yield immediate returns. The success of any good educational policy depends to a great extent on the efficiency of the supervision machinery. The illegal fees *being collected* from the students in the public secondary schools was as a result of governments poor monitoring of the programmes.

Such corrupt activity from the school administrators and teachers mutilates the implementation process of Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government should commit adequate financial resources to the UBE Programme in Nigeria.
2. There should be proper review by the government on the condition of service for the teachers with respect to their remuneration and other non-financial incentives so as to make for their greater performance and achievement of the USE programme in Nigeria.
3. The government should increase and improve greatly on its supervisory and inspectorate roles in the public schools in Nigeria to check the anomalies in area of illegal fees being collected from students.
4. The government should involve the school administrators (Principals), teachers and parents on the on-going UBE Projects in their various schools rather than solely relying on the politicians for the execution of such project. This is to ensure close monitoring and speedy completion of UBE projects.
5. Corruption practices should be discouraged in the course of UBE programme

implementation in Nigeria. The peculiar cases of illegal fees collection from students and abandonment of UBE school projects that have received full financial commitment must be stopped with full disciplinary measures meted to the perpetrators.

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