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Article *in* British Journal of Education · March 2024

DOI: 10.37745/bje.2013/vol12n317

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British Journal of Education
Vol.12, Issue 3, 1-7, 2024
Online ISSN: 2054-636X (Online)
Print ISSN: 2054-6351(Print)
Website: https://www.eajournals.org/
Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Exploration of Universal Basic Education Policy and its impact on Overall Education Quality of Schools in Nigeria

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doi: https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2013/vol12n317 Published February 7, 2024

Citation: Ojo, A.E. and Azeez A.S. (2024) Exploration of Universal Basic Education Policy and its impact on Overall Education Quality of Schools in Nigeria, *British Journal of Education*, Vol.12, Issue 3, 1-7

ABSTRACT: *Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was developed internally, although it is heavily influenced by global trends and developments in education. It is anticipated that its implementation will provide all Nigerians who are willing to learn with a top-notch basic education, as required by various international accords. Nevertheless, Nigeria is confronted with problems such a lack of resources, a lack of public awareness, an inadequate implementation of the new UBE curriculum, and low teacher motivation. These barriers continue to limit how effective the UBE policy may be. This study provided an important contribution to explore Universal Basic Education Policy and its impact on overall education quality of schools in Nigeria. More so, certain recommendations were made amongst others that cooperation between the School administration, Local Government, and parents is required to stop children from working and begging during school hours to reduce absenteeism.*

KEYWORDS: exploration, universal basic education, policy, education quality, schools, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The way that organizations, institutions, governments, and society operate is greatly influenced by policies (Robert, 2006). They offer a framework of principles, norms, and guidelines that control many facets of behavior, decision-making, and activities (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). Policies provide as a road map for accomplishing particular goals, controlling risks, fostering justice, and guaranteeing consistency across many situations. For complicated problems to be solved, progress to be made, and an environment that supports growth and stability, effective policies must be developed and put into place (Birkland, 2019). According to Sabatier and Weible (2014), policies can address a wide range of topics, including government, the economy, the environment, social

issues, healthcare, education, technology, and more. They can be created at various scales, ranging from the local to the global, and they can represent the variety of requirements and priorities within a particular setting.

Using extensive study, analysis, and consultation processes, a well-designed policy takes into consideration the viewpoints and interests of stakeholders (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2009). In order to do this, it seeks to establish a balance among various factors, including economic effectiveness, social equality, environmental sustainability, and individual rights. Policies decrease ambiguity, assure accountability, and promote predictability in decision-making processes by offering a clear set of rules and regulations (Hupe & Hill, 2021). Policies also have the ability to influence societal norms and values. They have the power to shape public perception, attitudes, and behavior, which aids in social transformation (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). Policymakers, specialists, interest groups, and the general public interact dynamically during the policymaking process, emphasizing the value of inclusiveness and participatory processes (Stone, 1997). In a nutshell policies are crucial tools for governance since they enable the realization of desired results and give decision-making a context. Through the creation and use of policies, organizations and societies are shaped in order to address problems, advance justice, and move forward.

Context: Nigerian Schools

Nigeria, a former British colony, has educational systems that are similar to those of other Commonwealth countries. In 1976, Nigeria, which had gained independence in 1960, implemented the Universal Primary Education Policy, the country's first free and mandatory education program (Bolaji, 2014). The execution of policy decisions has been a difficult problem within Nigeria's education system despite the country's heavy focus on education (Bolaji, Olufowobi & Oluwole, 2013). Numerous obstacles were encountered during the execution of the Universal Primary Education program in 1976, leading to a disorganized process that placed many school-aged children behind in their educational progress (Bolaji, 2014). A new initiative known as Universal Basic Education (UBE) was started in 1999, the year when democratic rule was established. However, since the UBE policy's inception over ten years ago, there hasn't been much progress in the industry (Bolaji, 2014).

Based on current studies into its execution, the purpose of this study is to assess the impacts and difficulties of the UBE policy in schools in Nigeria. Investigating this subject will provide a thorough grasp of the policy's success and the challenges it encounters.

Contribution of Policy towards Nigerian Schools and Education

According to the study done by Jaiyeoba (2009), the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy has a wider scope and more specified objectives, which is a significant departure from the unsuccessful Universal Primary Education (UPE) program. It is hoped that it will make UPE successful by resolving its problems. According to Rose (2007) and supported by her research, there has been a noteworthy change in the UBE program when compared to UPE, particularly in terms of broader access, the integration of early childhood education in public primary schools, and the provision

of mid-day meals. One explanation for this trend could be that the UBE policy was developed to support and strengthen the UPE program. In contrast to UPE, which only covered the first six years of elementary school, UBE covers pre-primary, primary, and junior secondary education. Programs for adult literacy and nomadic education are also covered. The educational system's expansion aids in improving reading proficiency at all levels.

The UBE strategy also has specific goals that are meant to equip people with the information, abilities, and mindsets they need to lead fulfilling lives, improve society, and fulfill their civic duties. These objectives show that UBE is a more advanced and improved program than UPE and so support the validity of the findings. The results of Jaiyeoba's (2009) study and the supporting information demonstrate how the UBE policy in Nigeria has improved over its predecessor, UPE. The expanded breadth, clear objectives, and dedication to comprehensive education show that the UBE program is moving forward. The program's potential demonstrates its success in promoting high levels of education and social development.

Jaiyeoba (2009) highlighted the UBE program's advantages for various parts of Nigerian civilisation, including social harmony, understanding, prowess in the workplace, and religious comprehension. Giving individuals the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to live fulfilling lives and benefit as much as possible from social, economic, and cultural advancements is the main objective of UBE. UBE was successful in achieving these objectives thanks to its broad scope, precise objectives, and effective execution tactics. These elements help to make the program more effective and possibly more successful than any other education endeavor that has been put into place in Nigeria before.

According to a study by Aliyu (2015) that concentrated on the effect of the UBE policy on the environment of Schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, the UBE (Universal Basic Education) Policy in that country has had a considerable and favorable impact on students' education. The study's conclusions show that schools in Kwara State have undergone a number of significant advances.
A reduction in the amount of school dropouts compared to prior years is one of the major advancements noted in the study conducted by Aliyu (2015). Dropout rates are on the decline, which is a reflection of parents' greater understanding of the value of education and acceptance of it as a necessary component for their kids' futures. Parental views have probably changed as a result of the UBE policy's emphasis on mandatory and free schooling, which removes financial obstacles and promotes more enrolment and retention in schools. According to Aliyu (2015)'s research, the UBE (Universal Basic Education) Policy significantly increased school enrolment rates.

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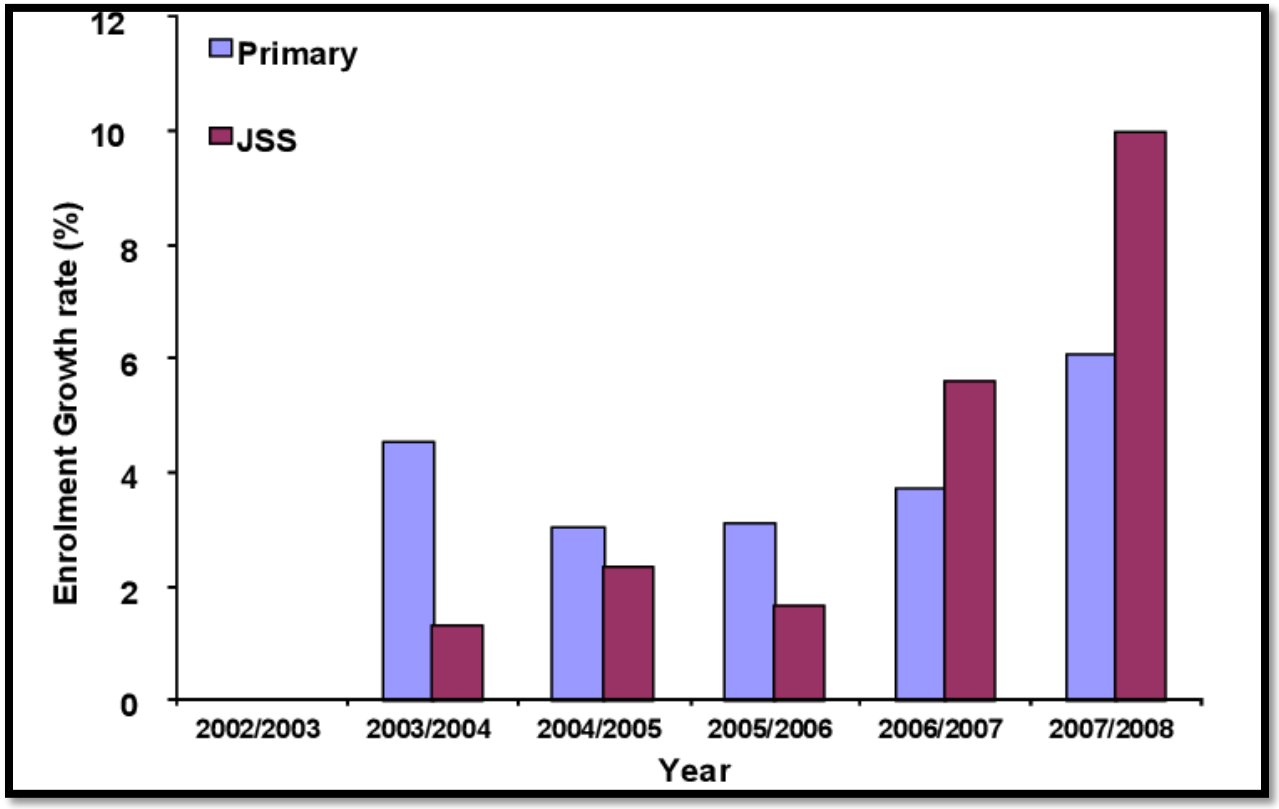


Figure 1: Enrolment rate in a state of Nigeria (Adeyemi & Adu, 2010)

In order to encourage more children to participate in education, this approach has been crucial, particularly at the primary level. By providing the provision of free and required education, the UBE program was successful in removing financial barriers that could have otherwise stopped children from enrolling in schools. As a result, more children are now able to enroll in the schools, improving the population's overall educational prospects. The UBE policy's implementation considerably increased the enrollment rate of Schools, which contributed to the improvement of education in general. By ensuring that education is both free and mandatory, the policy has removed the financial barrier that many households formerly faced when selecting whether to send their children to school. Parents are now more willing to enroll their children in school because they are no longer responsible for paying for tuition, textbooks, and other educational expenses.

The mandatory aspect of the UBE program has also been essential in ensuring that children have opportunity to an education. By mandating that all children attend school, the policy has effectively addressed worries about child labor, early marriage, and other factors that would have stopped kids from getting an education. Along with growing enrollment, the UBE (Universal Basic Education) Policy has improved the teacher-student ratio at Schools. The employment of teachers and placements in schools have increased as a result of the implementation of the UBE program. This has successfully decreased the teacher-student ratio, resulting in better individual attention

#and educational quality. Less students per instructor means that teachers are better able to cater to each student's requirements and offer sufficient support (Aliyu, 2015).

Additionally, Jaiyeoba (2009) discovered that the government had successfully hired the required workforce in accordance with the implementation blueprint Federal Ministry of Education FME (1999)'s specifications. It was intended to hire about 28,000 instructors to establish a teacher-to-student ratio of about 1:40. In almost every state, it has been noted that a significant amount of teachers have been hired for the UBE program. As a result, the teachers who took part in the survey confirmed that the government had hired enough teachers for the program. Additionally, they attested to the fact that science labs had qualified personnel and that libraries had appropriate staffing. In addition, it was mentioned that only competent instructors were sought for, in contrast to the previous practice during the UPE (Universal Primary Education) era where both qualified and unqualified teachers were recruited to teach in schools.

The UBE Policy's promotion of inclusive education is another important improvement on Schools. According to Aliyu (2015), the UBE policy places a great emphasis on making sure that kids with special needs and disabilities have access to high-quality education. This emphasis on inclusive education recognizes the significance of giving all students equal educational opportunity, regardless of their capabilities or limitations. The UBE policy prioritizes inclusive education in an effort to provide an inclusive, accessible, and supportive educational system for all children.

Problems/ Challenges of the UBE Programme

Even though the policy has improved several aspects of education, there are also some issues associated with the proper implementation of UBE Policy. Some of the problems/challenges of the UBE scheme include:

Inadequate funding: The insufficiency of financing allotted for the rehabilitation of existing educational institutions and the development of new ones is one of the major issues mentioned in the UBE (Universal Basic Education) planning and Implementation Document (Nigeria, 2000). Despite having a projected cost of $5 million, it appears that not all of the money have been distributed, as shown by the existence of outdated school buildings devoid of required support structures like libraries and laboratories. Even when these facilities do exist, Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) underline that they are frequently underfunded, emphasizing the ongoing issue of insufficient funding for educational facilities under the UBE program. This is also one challenge for Schools as it is not getting adequate funding.

Lack of enough competent teachers: In the UBE Policy, the teacher-to-student ratio is stated as 1:40. Even though, the teacher to student ratio has improved in Schools of Nigeria, it is not 1:40 as stated by UBE. There is a long way to go before it comes to 1:40 because many classes of the schools still have one teacher for around 80 students. Due to the expense of hiring as many

instructors as the program requires, this has proved to be a significant concern in regards with the effective implementation of UBE (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

Poor implementation of the new UBE curriculum: Teachers facilitate knowledge and learning, which is essential to accomplishing educational objectives. The implementation of the planned curriculum by teachers is a must for curriculum change to be successful in Nigeria. However, not all educators at schools acquire the necessary preparation, which might make it difficult to successfully implement curriculum changes. To close the gap between the intended curriculum and actual learning results, it is necessary to prioritize teacher training and professional development (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

Poor public enlightenment: All participants in the UBE program have certain duties and obligations, some of which are required by law. Many participants, nevertheless, don't appear to be aware of these obligations. For instance, the UBE law imposes penalties on parents and other legal representatives who forbid their children from attending school. In spite of this, children continue to beg and sell goods during school hours without any relevant action being taken (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

Poor monitoring/evaluation: The only way to determine the efficacy of an educational enterprise is through monitoring and assessment, yet this is often not done (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

Poor motivation of teachers: Some teachers at Schools have extremely low morale since the government and school administrators frequently underpay them and don't value their work. Their general productivity is significantly impacted by this lack of fair pay (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy was created domestically, while it draws inspiration from trends and advancements in education around the world. As mandated by several international agreements, it is believed that its implementation will offer all Nigerian individuals who are prepared to learn a high-quality basic education. However, Nigeria faces issues such a lack of funds, a lack of public awareness, a poor implementation of the new UBE curriculum, and low teacher enthusiasm. The efficiency of the UBE policy is still hampered by these obstacles. These obstacles could be removed by strictly following the recommendations made in this paper, leading to the development of high-quality basic education.

Recommendations

1. Cooperation between the School administration, Local Government, and parents is required to stop children from working and begging during school hours to reduce absenteeism.

2. Since UBE has produced better results than earlier initiatives, its implementation should not be altered or discontinued. To guarantee the best results, nevertheless, efficient monitoring measures should be implemented.
3. Teachers' morale and motivation must be raised through prizes and recognition. The importance of their role should be reflected in adequate compensation and benefits.
4. For the UBE program's funding to be used in the right way, a strong monitoring approach is essential. A well-funded and well-planned program can lose its effectiveness if there is embezzlement and corruption.

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