

**ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC
EDUCATION IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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Abstract

The study focused on the extent to which free Universal Basic Education programme is implemented in Imo state, Nigeria. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 501 staff consisting of 216 Staff of Imo State Universal Basic Education Board and 285 staff of the Ministry of Education. The sample size of the study was 130 representing 26% of the population drawn using the stratified random sampling techniques. The instruments for data collection were checklist and a self structured questionnaire titled Assessing Free Universal Basic Education Scale (AFUBES) which was validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation with a reliability index of 0.85 obtained using test re-test method. Percentage, mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed among others that the UBE programme in Imo Sate, Nigeria is partially free. The study concluded among others that there should be a significant increase in the budgetary allocation to the education sectors.

Key words: Assessment, Implementation, Universalization, Basic, Education

Introduction

Education is one of the vital indices used in the measurement and categorization of nations as developed or developing. This is determined by the quality of literacy among its citizens. Education is also a very important instrument of measuring the socio-economic and political development. The quality and quantity of the educated workforce engender the development. In

view of the above, education is seen as the light that drives away the darkness of illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and enables individual as well as national development. Thus, the basic concern of every society in the world has been to drastically reduce illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and achieve development. Yoloymas cited in Daura & Audu (2015) stated that in view of government commitment to eradicate

illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration, government decided to adopt the UBE Programme.

Universal Basic Education scheme is a programme adopted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to provide functional, universal, and quality education for all Nigerians, irrespective of age, sex, race, religion, occupation, or location. Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) attested that the UBE scheme was designed to ensure adequate and qualitative education that is directed towards the achievement of the nation's objectives. It is designed not just as a right but also for capacity building. It ensures human capacity development and consequently national development. To this effect, Adokiye (2013) asserted that the issues that led to the inauguration of the UBE programme are all developmental in nature. Fundamentally, the UBE programme is designed to ensure unfettered access to basic education. The UBE consists of three basic levels: the first level (lower basic) is the first three years in primary school; the second level (middle basic) is the 4th – 6th years in primary school and the third level (upper basic) is the 7th– 9th years in the scheme which is referred to as junior secondary education (Ado, Akinbobola & Inyang, 2010). In

other words, Universal basic education is of low level basic and upper level basic. Low level basic encompasses primary education while upper basic encompasses junior secondary education. One of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education programme is to provide free and compulsory Education from primary to Junior Secondary levels.

Free education is the education that is provided for an individual without cost or payment. This implies that the education is free of charge on the part of the beneficiaries. In this wise, 'Free Education' according to Evans-Obinna and Ndieze (2017: 87) can be described as 'all round education, being provided for a child freely by Government, the Philanthropists, and other agencies without him/her or the parent paying a Penny'. In the same vein, Ige (2015) averred that when the cost of educating a child is borne by Government either at the state or national level, or an external agent(s) apart from the parents, it is termed 'free education'. Free education entails the withdrawal of every challenge from available opportunities to access education. Free primary and upper basic education according to Madu (2017) means that the services provided in public primary and junior secondary schools shall be free of charge. Okeke and Osuala (2016) enumerated requirements that

qualify the system as being free: procurement of library offices, specialized and professional types of equipments, enrollment and maintenance of qualified and sufficient labor, educational cost free, free sustaining, free concentrating on materials, settlement, transportation, school uniform and some other needs of the learner. The sum total of these makes education free. The scholar further stated that the partial implementation of the enumerated requirements does not qualify the system as being free as the absence of any of these requirements constitutes constraint to ones education.

UBE programme was structured to be basically free and compulsory to all children between the ages of six to twelve. The section 9 of the UBE Act of 2004 says that all the services provided in UBE shall be free of charge, these include tuition, books, instructional materials and furniture and abolition of all forms of levies. It is worthy of note that the motive of providing free education for a child is to assist the parents towards alleviating the burden of providing education for him/her. Audu (2015) carried out a study on the assessment of the implementation of the universal basic education programme in Edo State. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the extent to which the universal basic education programme

is free. The study found out that the UBE programme is partially free as perceived by the school heads and school teachers. The programme is considered partially free because there were some items that are considered free but weren't free. In another study on assessing free education of public secondary schools for sustainable national development in Nigeria, Evans-Obinna&Ndieze (2017) found out that in this free education program, a substantial cost is borne by the students. This entails in the actual sense, there is no free education in Nigeria or the extent of freeness of UBE schools is very minimal and or not complete (Doggoh, 2014).

Too many countries still face so many difficulties of all kinds – economic, social and cultural, scientific and technical – which, despite the efforts they are making hinder the effective implementation of the UBE programme. In many cases, there are just not enough teachers, schools or books, infrastructures. Others include dilapidated structures, unpaid salaries of workers, incessant withdrawal of qualified manpower and lack of cooperation among the three tiers of governments. In support of this, UNESCO (2001) on Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report provides a detailed analysis of factors influencing the quality of education in several regions of the world, which it says

could prevent many countries from achieving Education for All goals. And these include: lack of financial and material resources for schools, the number of teachers and their training, the amount of actual learning time, facilities and leadership. Also, Eze (2012) in a study on constraints to the effective implementation of the universal basic education (UBE) scheme in Obollo-Afor Education Zone found out that the UBE programme is being constrained by some factors linked to human resources such as inadequacy of professionally-trained teachers, poor motivation of teachers, poor attention to teacher education, and teachers' poor condition of service and inadequate infrastructural facilities such as lack of classroom and office blocks, inadequate facilities, and poor state of classrooms and teachers' rooms. Idehen and Izevbigie as cited in Ado, Akinbobola and Inyang (2010) posited that the implementation stage of any educational programme contends with practical obstacles which make it impossible for the actualization of intended goals and objectives. The scholars further highlighted such problems to include: shortage of teachers, lack of qualified teachers, absence of textbooks, absence of necessary equipment, insufficient funds, poor organizational abilities, ineffective management and supervision.

To ensure such a laudable free educational programme, there is need for strategies to be put in place. Strategies are well planned series of action or ways through which stated objectives can be achieved. It is therefore important that strategies be employed or applied so as to guarantee the success of UBE within the context of the global time frame. In other words, proper strategies will enable Universal Basic Education to remove all the obstacles to lifelong (free) education for millions of Nigeria citizens who otherwise would be denied the opportunities of education. Evans-Obinna and Ndieze (2017) in a study on the assessment of free education of public secondary schools for sustainable national development in Nigeria, found out that provision of textbooks, teacher's guide, and learning materials enhance free education for sustainable National Development. The study also found out that government and non-governmental organization's funding could boost free education. Other strategies according to Ejike (2008) that can be

effective in the implementation of UBE can be identified as follows: Provision of school libraries; Recruitment of qualified teachers; Provision of classroom facilities; and supervision and monitoring of the scheme by the UBE board. In addition Eze (2012) found out that improved funding of

the programme, review of the programme by experts and effective use of trained educational administrators in the implementation, regular payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, adequate attention to teacher education and effective supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the UBE programme are some of the measures that could help the UBE programme to achieve its laudable objectives. Thus, for a successful UBE program implementation it is very important that some practical strategies be adopted (Ezeaku, 2013). This undoubtedly will ensure the effective implementation of UBE programme at the upper level of the basic education which is junior secondary three (JSS 3).

Statement of the Problem

The compulsory free universal basic education is a relatively new education programme in Nigeria which is in line with global best practices. It is a laudable initiative geared towards domesticating "education for all", beginning at the foundational levels. It is a nine year free and compulsory education programme. Students are required to attend free and compulsory 9 years in primary education and junior secondary education in which the former should be completed for a period of 6 years while the latter should be completed in a period of 3 years. Free

education will lead to more educated people. More educated people in the society leads to the overall improvement in the quality of life in the society. It is no gainsaying that a country such as Nigeria requires free education for her citizens, in view of her present developmental challenges and the role it can play in combating these challenges. However, the researchers are concerned with the increasing number of children that are out of school, fifteen years after the programme was signed into law. Could this be as a result of the private cost of acquiring this basic education?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to assess the extent to which free Universal Basic Education programme is implemented in Imo state, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Examine the extent to which the Universal Basic Education is free.
2. Investigate the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. How free is Universal Basic Education?

2. What are the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between the staff of Ministry of Education and Imo State Universal Basic Education Board with respect to the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 501 staff consisting of 216 Staff

of Imo State Universal Basic Education Board and 285 staff of the Ministry of Education. The sample size of the study was 130 representing 26% of the population drawn using the stratified random sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were checklist and a self-structured questionnaire titled Assessing Free Universal Basic Education Scale (AFUBES) which was validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation with a reliability index of 0.85 obtained using test re-test method. Percentage, mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

Research Question One: How free is Universal Basic Education?

Table One: Frequency and Percentage responses on the extent to which the Universal Basic

Education is Free

S/N		Total No	F	%	Remarks
1	Tuition Fee	130	130	100	Free
2	Development Levy	130	124	95.4	Free
3	Caution Fee	130	127	97.7	Free
4	Cost of Uniform	130	41	31.5	Not Free
5	Examination Material	130	106	81.5	Free
6	Cost of books/stationeries	130	66	50.8	Partially
	Free				
7	Transportation	130	48	36.9	Not Free
8	Cost of Feeding while at school	130	53	40.8	Not Free
9	Registration Fee	130	70	53.8	Partially
	Free				
	Aggregate %			65.4	Partially
	Free				

Key: 70% and above Free
 50-69% Partially Free
 1-49% Not Free

Table 1 above shows the extent to which the Universal Basic Education is free. From the table, the percentage scores of responses of the respondents regarding items 1, 2, 3, and 5, are 100%, 95.4%, 97.7% and 81.5% respectively. This indicates that the four items are free of charge. Items 4, 7, and 8 have percentage scores of 31.5%, 36.9% and 40.8%

respectively. This indicates that the items are not free of charge. Items 6 and 9 with percentage scores of 50.8% and 53.8% which are a little above average depicts that they are partially free as some schools are charging fees for this purpose. With the aggregate % of 65.4 the finding revealed that the UBE programme is partially free as perceived by the respondents.

Research Question Two: What are the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education?

Table Two: Mean and Standard Deviation scores on the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education.

S/N	Problems Variables	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
10	Private cost on the part of the students	2.75	0.78	Agreed
11	Inadequate awareness	2.49	0.83	Disagreed
12	Inadequate funding by the government	2.99	0.60	Agreed
13	Inadequate facilities for the UBE programme	2.93	0.67	Agreed
14	Inadequate provision of instructional materials	2.80	0.71	Agreed
15	Inadequate remuneration for teachers	2.78	0.73	Agreed
16	Students are not adequately motivated to learn	2.47	0.86	Disagreed
17	Inadequate qualified teachers	2.51	0.83	Agreed

Table 2 shows the results of the problems militating against the implementation of free upper basic education. From the table, the mean responses from the respondents showed that items 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17 with mean scores of 2.75, 2.99, 2.93, 2.80, 2.78 and 2.51 respectively are considered to be the problems militating

against the implementation of free upper basic. However, items 2 and 16 with means scores of 2.49 and 2.47 respectively below the criterion mean of 2.50 are considered not to be problems militating against the implementation of free upper basic.

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the staff of Ministry of Education and Imo State Universal Basic Education Board with regard to the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education.

Table 3: z-test of difference between the mean responses of the staff of Ministry of Education and Imo State Universal Basic Education Board with regard to the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
MoE	74	2.76	0.69	128	1.20	1.96	NS
IMSUBEB	56	2.66	0.81				

Table 3 shows that the calculated z-value of 1.20 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 557

degree of freedom. Sequel to this, the null hypothesis is upheld.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed that the UBE programme is partially free as perceived by the staff of the Ministry of Education and Imo State Universal Basic Education Board. The result is the same with Edo State as found out by a study carried out by Audu (2015). The programme is considered partially free because there were some items that are considered free but weren't free. Okeke and Osuala (2016) stated that the partial implementation of the enumerated requirements does not qualify the system as being free as the absence of any of these requirements constitutes constraint to ones education. The finding is consistent with Evans-Obinna and Ndieze (2017) who found out that in this free education program, a substantial cost is borne by the students. The finding is contrary to The section 9 of the UBE Act 2004 which says all the services provided in UBE shall be free of charge these include tuition, books, instructional materials and furniture and abolition of all forms of levies. The finding supported the assertion of Doggoh (2014) that in the actual sense, there is no free education in Nigeria or the extent of freeness of UBE schools is very minimal and or not complete.

The second finding indicated that private cost on the part of the students, inadequate

funding by the government, inadequate facilities for the UBE programme, inadequate provision of instructional materials, inadequate remuneration for teachers and inadequate qualified teachers are the problems militating against the implementation of free Universal Basic Education. The result is consistent with the findings of Eze (2012) and UNESCO (2001). The finding is in consonance with the problems highlighted by Idehen and Izevbigie as cited in Ado, Akinbobola and Inyang (2010) which include: shortage of teachers, lack of qualified teachers, absence of textbooks, absence of necessary equipment, insufficient funds, poor organizational abilities, ineffective management and supervision. The finding also affirms the contribution of Idehen and Izevbigie as cited in Ado, Akinbobola and Inyang (2010) that the implementation stage of any educational programme contends with practical obstacles which make it impossible for the actualization of intended goals and objectives. This entails that the implementation of Universal Basic Education scheme cannot achieve the desired objectives due to problems that beset its implementation.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings it was concluded that the UBE programme is partially free as perceived by the principals

and teachers. This because of the prevailing private cost in acquiring basic education. The problems militating against the implementation of free upper basic education are private cost on the part of the students, inadequate funding by the government, inadequate facilities for the UBE programme, inadequate provision of instructional materials, inadequate remuneration for teachers and inadequate qualified teachers.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:
2. There should be a significant increase in the budgetary allocation to the education sectors.
3. All critical stakeholders in education should be effectively involved in the planning and implementation process of the programme (participatory planning).
4. Public-Private Partnership strategies should be strengthened in the funding of education.
5. Proper financial management practices should be strictly implemented in school administration.

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