

## Universal Basic Education and Human Resource Development and Utilization in Technical Education in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched by President Obasanjo in Nigeria in 1999 in response to the global trend to provide education for all by the year 2002. Technical education is an integral part of the scope to be covered by the program precisely in Junior Secondary School where the pre-vocational subjects such as introductory technology are offered. Unfortunately, there are critical problems confronting the teaching and learning of this subject, chief among them is dearth in human resources development and utilization. The groups of teachers that are to teach the introductory technology in the UBE are NCE technical teachers (FRN 2004) but only few of them are on ground. The lacuna here is how will Nigeria recruit and utilize the group of teachers for effective implementation of the UBE? Other problems confronting the program are inadequate tools, machines and training materials, insufficient funding and dearth in furniture. A number of strategies were recommended such as training and retraining of NCE technical teachers, giving special salary package to the teachers, scholarship award to deserving students to pursue NCE technical and B.Sc. technical education programs in tertiary institutions, both locally and abroad.

### INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the foundation upon which the secondary and tertiary levels of education are built. This is the reason why in 1955 and 1957, the civilian governments of western eastern regions of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education Scheme respectively (Ochoga 2002). This effort was short-lived because the Federal Government then had no constitutional responsibility for ownership of primary schools. Due to this fact, the regions discovered that the financial implication of such a project was too enormous for them (Bamanya 2000).

Consequently in 1976, the Federal military government of Nigeria under the headship of General Olusegun Obasanjo launched a six-year free Universal Primary Education (UPE) Scheme. This scheme encountered such problems as non-availability of reliable data. According to Ojiah (2003), the estimate enrolment statistics has it that less than one million pupils would register for the scheme, but over three million pupils turned up. This made projections for teacher supply, instructional materials and equipment unrealistic.

However, in 1999 at Sokoto, in his desire to provide functional and qualitative education for the citizenry, President Olusegun Obasanjo again launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

The provision of free universal and compulsory Basic Education for every Nigerian child

of school age seems laudable but one may ask to what extent has the objective of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) been achieved? Various agencies in-charge of UBE brought out posters, handbills and jingle on radio and television. These media only favour children of school age in urban areas but to the detriment of rural children. The intention of the planner was that UBE school children should be provided with free books, mid-day meal, free good furniture. These expectations are far from being realizable (Okunsebor and Okonta 2010). This paper therefore makes a case on how these challenges could be forestalled.

### The Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The Universal Basic Education (UBE), according to FRN (2004), shall be of nine-year duration comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non-formal education programs (including nomadic education) at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out-of-school youths.

According to Oga (2002), the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched in Nigeria in 1999 in response of the global trend of providing education for all by the year 2002. He enumerated a number of global efforts that were made in that direction to include such declarations as:

- i) New Delhi 1990 declaration on Education of E.9 Countries;
  - ii) Ougadougou 1992 Declaration on Education of Women and Girls;
  - iii) Amman 1996 affirmation on the pursuit of goals of Jomtien;
  - iv) Durban 1998 statement of commitment of inter-African collaboration for the development on education;
  - v) O.A.U. Decade of Education in Africa, 1997 – 2006.
- (b) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
  - (c) Give the opportunities for developing manipulative skill that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limit of his capacity; and
  - (d) Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

In line with the above objectives, creative arts (drawing and handcraft) is the only subject found in primary school curriculum that has an aspect of technical education since technical education is defined by (FRN 2004) as a type of education that leads to the acquisition of technical skills for economic production.

Creative arts and handicrafts cannot provide occupational skills in technical education. Creative arts and handicrafts is only designed to develop the elementary psychomotor skills. Therefore, there is a total absence of technical education in primary schools (Okorie 2001). Moreover, students, in primary schools are still too young to make a choice of occupation, furthermore, they are physically too weak to commence training for an occupation.

### Objective of UBE

The major objective of the program is to wipe out illiteracy and ensure the acquisition of functional skills for alleviation of poverty. However, in order to correct the inadequacies of the UPE and lay a solid foundation for the promotion of basic education in Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) came up with the following specific objectives.

- (a) Development in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- (b) The provision of basic education for very Nigerian child of school age.
- (c) Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system (through improved reliance, quality and efficiency)
- (d) Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schools through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education.
- (e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy manipulative and life-long learning.

### Technical Education in Primary School

The Universal Basic Education (UBE), as earlier stated comprises of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary school.

Primary education is the education given in institutions for children aged 6-11 years plus (FRN 2004). It is the foundation of which the rest of education rest upon. Its objectives specifically include:

- (a) Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;

### Technical Education in Junior Secondary Schools

In the junior secondary school, students are taught basic subjects which will enable them to acquire further knowledge and skills. Students are meant to offer a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 13 subjects in the JSS final examination. These subjects are selected from all the eight core subjects (Introductory technology inclusive) and at least one subject from pre-vocational electives and non-prevocational electives. It should be understood here that education at this stage is more or less a general education with the integration of vocational –technical aspect of education as basic part of general education.

Technical education is taught in the junior secondary schools as integrated aspect of introductory technology. Introductory technology as a subject comprises basic electricity, electronics, metal work and woodwork, elementary building construction, technical drawing, food preservation and storage and other miscellaneous topics.

Introductory technology as taught in the junior secondary school is meant to provide basic

knowledge to industrial technology. It is designed to expose the students to the appreciation of technology and subsequently develop their interest in various areas of industrial technology. Although the curriculum of introductory technology includes some practical oriented contents, the age (12-14 years) characteristics of the student hinders the acquisition of practical skills as they are too young to manipulate tools and equipment for their study.

Consequently, more emphasis is on theory than practical, as a result the students cannot acquire here the necessary competent skill needed in industrial technology. For this lack of practical skills, students in their JSS certificate examination are examined in theory (essay and objective tests) and practical, which is only on technical drawing.

### UBE IN DEVELOPED NATIONS

Education, especially qualitative one is the key to effective national development. Domination of developed nations like Japan, United States of America, Canada, Britain and South Korea are as a result of the qualitative education made accessible to the citizens. In the United States of America, free and compulsory education has been organized from the primary to secondary school level. This enthusiasm for qualitative education was the fundamental factor responsible for rapid economic development of USA. According to Majasan (1998),

Beyond the high school there are opportunities for everyone to branch off into vocational training of different types or to university work which leads on to research, the backbone of industry, technology and general human development.

Sound qualitative education was a priority in Japan. The Japanese educational system laid emphasis on science, technology, local Japanese values, ethics and ideals. Courses in ethics in the primary school were stressed. Loyalty to the state, family and emperor formed an integral part of the curriculum. In Japanese education, there is nothing like quota for every thing hinges on merit.

### Critical Problems in the UBE Program

The problems that saw the end of the 6-3-3-4 system of education are still very prominent with the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program. These problems are:

#### *(i) Poor planning for Human Resource Development and Utilization in Vocational Technical Education*

The human resource development or the recruitment of teachers that would man the UBE program may encounter some difficulties if urgent remedies are not taken. This problem is most acute in the technical course. Technology education teachers are very few, therefore qualified human resources that will man the tools, machines and materials as well as impart the practical skills, knowledge and altitude to the students are not there for the UBE program. From Federal Ministry of Education, statistics reveal that Nigeria needs 109,000 technical teachers for the effective implementation of National Policy on Education at the secondary and technical college levels but only 8,000 were available. This shortfall of the number of technical education teachers will affect the teaching and quality of teaching in the UBE programs.

With the new national Policy on Education, (FRN 2004) the N.C.E. teachers are meant to teach in the UBE program. Specifically, the N.C.E technical teachers are the groups of teachers that will handle the pre-vocational subjects in the junior secondary schools. However, these groups of teachers are not there.

According to Aina (1986), only 5,000 of the 105,000 needed were available. Indeed, Sofolahan (1991) noted that during the 1984/85 school year, there was a need for approximately 190,000 qualified teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria. He added that apart from the general dearth of qualified teachers, special problems were envisaged in specific subject areas.

He noted that the most critical shortage of teachers was the pre-vocational training for which approximately 30,000 teachers were needed for the 1984/85 academic year. In recent times, the situation is not different. In 1997, a survey report by NERDC of the state of demand and supply of vocational technical teachers nationwide indicated that about 270,000 representing 74% of total need were not available (Aina 2000).

Human resource development in the context of this paper implies preparing, getting or making an individual ready for the teaching profession, precisely in technical education through teaching and practice. Human resource development, therefore, means receiving pre-service and in-service education.

Nwaokolo (2003) stated that next to the pupils, teachers are the largest and most crucial inputs of the educational system. Teachers translate theory into practice, hence the qualities and effectiveness of the UBE depends on the quality, efficiency and devotion of the technical teachers. The Federal Ministry of Education (FRN 2004) realized this, hence it stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of the teachers.

The technical teachers, therefore, should be trained to enhance his qualities, competencies, efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically, the technical teachers should be trained for the following reasons:

- i) To acquire enough knowledge and skills of the subject(s) he will teach.
- ii) To acquire the qualities and competencies he needs to inspire and impart knowledge and skills to those he will teach i.e. to acquire the skills of pedagogy- the science of teaching. These qualities and competences include:
  - a) To acquire the knowledge of the prerequisites (or conditions) for learning, as well as factors, which affect learning.
  - b) Drawing up the scheme of work, lesson planning, lesson implantation and evaluation.
  - c) Formulation of instructional objective, selection of contents and learning experience, selection and appropriate use of instructional materials.
- iii) To equip him with the knowledge of the physical, intellectual, social and emotional characteristics of the child as these will influence his actions and other activities involved in teaching and learning process.
- iv) To acquire knowledge and skills of preparation, improvisation and maintenance of other school equipment and facilities.
- v) To acquire the knowledge and skills of classroom management and control.
- vi) To acquire the knowledge and skills of ensuring good sanitation in the school .
- vii) To acquire the knowledge and skill of guidance and counseling.
- viii) To imbibe the code of conduct (ethics) of the teaching profession.
- ix) To acquire self confidence and interest in teaching.

***(ii) Issues of Hand Tools, Machines, Training Materials and Workshops***

Hand tools, machines, training materials and workshops for pre-vocational subject in the UBE

project are dearth in supply. This lapse in the procurement of these items does not augur well for the practical acquisition of skills for the beneficiaries of the UBE program.

The reason why there is shortage of equipment and materials is partly due to high cost of technology education equipment (Osuala 2004). The impact of this trend is that the training of the students becomes impeded and they end up not acquiring enough skills to go into the labour markets.

The issue of workshops is more deteriorating. Most schools in Nigeria for the UBE project do not have workshops. This is the reason why the introductory technology equipment could not be installed.

***(iii) Inadequate Funding***

There is no doubt that the government at different levels is making huge budgetary allocations to education every year. Nevertheless, government sources alone are inadequate to meet all the needs of the system. Technology education is capital intensive, therefore, other sources of generating revenue for the UBE project should be exploited (Jimoh-Kadiri 2003).

***(iv) Insufficient Furniture for Both Teachers and Learners***

Though federal, state and local government are providing furniture for the classrooms, this furniture is inadequate considering the number of pupils admitted in each academic session.

**Needs for Technical Teachers to be Re-trained for the UBE**

Retraining means receiving in-service education. It implies subjects or exposing an individual to further teaching and practice after the initial training. It may also be taken as improving the teacher.

Our society is dynamic. Our needs, values, aspirations and expectations change from time to time. Knowledge, skills and methodologies also change as a result of research, since education is the fastest tool for socialization and propagation of culture and teachers are tools used to implement the teaching-learning process, all teachers including the N.C.E. Technical teachers should be retrained on a regular basis.

The avenues for retraining or improving the N.C.E. (Technical) teachers according to Iwuanyanwu (1998) include:

- i) Attending and participating actively in seminars, conferences and workshops;
- ii) Belonging to some professional associations where the teachers can meet with experienced colleagues to exchange ideas and talks about new happenings and development (innovations) in the teaching subjects and professional teachers education;
- iii) Departmental or in-house seminars, conferences and workshops where senior colleagues help the other to improve their lot;
- iv) Higher training through part-time programs, sandwich program, and full time or study leave with pay.

The purpose of retraining the N.C.E technical teachers for the UBE is to improve his qualities, expertise or competence, efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically, the NCE Technical teachers should be retrained whether in Nigeria or abroad to be able to equip themselves for the teaching of the UBE programs. Other reasons why the NCE technical teachers should be retrained include:

- a) To update the teachers by exposing him to current trends or innovations in the field such as new knowledge, skills, practices and processes.
- b) To improve quality of the knowledge and skills he has already acquired.
- c) To improve his commitment and devotion to his job
- d) To improve his effectiveness and productivity
- e) To improve his self-confidence and interest in teaching

### CONCLUSION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a nine-year duration academic period from primary one to junior secondary school class three. The program has been placed on board though with some imminent problems such as inadequate technical teachers, hand tools, machines, workshops, training materials to mention but a few. Strategies such as training and retraining of technical teachers, special salary package for teachers, equipping the workshop with hand tools and machines will make the UBE project to move forward when implemented.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to improve UBE Program in Vocational Technical Education:

- i) N.C.E. Technical teachers that will teach the pre-vocational subjects for the UBE project should have sufficient work experience and knowledge to be able to realistically train the students practically. This task can only be achieved by teachers going for training and retraining in industries and academic institutions.
- ii) The technical or technology education teachers should be given special salary package. Technology teaching allowance of between 35% and 40% of their monthly salary is recommended to all technology education teachers to stem the exodus to the industry.
- iii) The workshop/studios/laboratories should be equipped with relevant machines and hand tools.
- iv) About 10 percent of the education tax fund should be voted for technical education for the procurement of tools, equipment, training materials and infrastructural facilities.
- v) Students of technical education should be awarded scholarship for further education precisely to obtain N.C.E Technical and B.Sc. Technical Education in various tertiary institutions.
- vi) Government should provide adequate fund and apart from funding the scheme, should ensure that credible persons are involved in the implementation process. Probity, transparency and accountability should be ensured.
- vii) Federal, State and Local government should provide adequate furniture to schools.

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