

Research Article

PERCEIVED MEASURES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

As a way of addressing the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education programme was launched with a view to provide free and compulsory education for all children. Based on the forgoing premise, this study examines perceived measures for effective implementation of UBE programme in primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Three key objectives were formulated to guide the study. quantitative research design approach were employed. Five headmasters and ten principals were selected from three senatorial districts in Delta State using stratified, purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Instrument titled “Interview Protocol on Perceived Measures for Effective Implementation of UBE programme (IPPMEI) was used to gather relevant information. Also, secondary data was obtained from the Federal Ministry of Education’s education indicators. Findings from qualitative approach indicate that the objective of free and compulsory education for children in primary and junior secondary schools is yet to be fully achieved, and that there are many factors associated with the implementation of UBE programme. Those factors include poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance culture, lack of adequate data and poor teachers’ remuneration. In support, additional findings from quantitative approach revealed that there is an overpopulation of pupils in the classroom. Specifically, pupil-class room ratio in public primary schools is 57 while pupil-classroom ratio in junior secondary schools is 52. There is a decline in enrolment level because pupil enrolment level in public primary school is 234,6112 while student enrolment level in public junior secondary schools is 924,662. The completion rate is also a serious issue. The completion rate in public primary school is 43.13 for male and 39.48 for female, while the completion rate in junior

secondary school is 42.74 for male and 35.83 for female. Furthermore, there are inadequate teachers in both primary and junior secondary schools. For instance, the total number of qualified primary school teachers is 7,930 while number for junior secondary schools is 5,283. The number of unqualified teachers in primary schools is 1,377 while 6,059 are unqualified in junior secondary schools. Measures suggested for effective implementation of UBE programme includes adequate data gathering; adequate funding; adequate infrastructure; adequate availability of teaching and learning materials; recruitment of qualified teachers; and teachers' welfare.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Effective Implementation, Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Introduction

It is often said that education remains critical to global development and human welfare in every society, and especially for Africa and indeed for Nigeria, given the state of our development. When delivered well, education promises young people employment, better earnings, good health, and a life without poverty. For communities, education spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. The foregoing benefits depend on learning, and schooling without learning is a wasted opportunity (World Bank, 2018). More than that, it's a great injustice: the children whom societies fail the most are the ones who are most in need of a good education to succeed in life. It is on this premise that the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in September 1999 for the purpose of achieving compulsory, free and universal basic education. It was also Nigeria's response to the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The UBE programme, as a policy reform measure, is aimed at rectifying distortions in basic education (for primary and junior secondary schools) delivery in the country as well as catering for basic education in the formal and non-formal sectors. The main thrust of the UBE programme is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills. Specifically, the objectives of the programme include developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion; provision of free, compulsory, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age group; reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system, and catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

UBE programme was established mainly to cater for primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. According to National Policy on Education, Section 2 sub-section 18, primary education is the education given to children aged 6-12 years. Section 2 sub-section 19 states that one of the objectives of primary education is to provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability. Similarly, section 2 sub-section 21 of the policy described junior secondary education as the education which a child receives immediately and after primary school. Section 2 sub-section 22 of the policy states that one of the objectives of junior secondary school is to provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and educational advancement (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

In spite of the success recorded in providing basic education in Nigeria, World Bank (2018) report shows that education crisis in Nigeria is currently widening the social inclusion gaps in the country. The Bank observed that even after several years in school, millions of children could not read, write or do basic Mathematics. This learning crisis, according to the report, is widening social gaps instead of narrowing them. The report further indicates that millions of children in Nigeria face the prospect of lost opportunities and lower wages in the future because their primary and secondary schools were failing to educate them to succeed in life. In the same vein, recent report released by the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that there are over 10 million out-of-school-children in Nigeria.

In Delta State, there is a general belief that much desired socio-political and economic changes can only be achieved through education, whether formal or non-formal. Given the historical antecedent, Delta State ranks high among the educationally conscious and thirsty states in the country especially with its emphasis on education as a veritable tool for socio-political and economic growth (Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2014). Despite the fact that Delta State occupies a frontline position in the country's education sector in terms of service delivery, there are 551,709 out-of-school children in public primary and junior secondary schools in the state, as reported in Nigeria Education Indicators, which was released by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2017, indicating that much is needed to be done to ensure that no child is left out of education. In view of the foregoing, therefore, this study examined the perceived measures for effective implementation of UBE programme in Delta State so that the objectives of primary and junior secondary education can be achieved.

Literature Review

Past studies revealed that education in Nigeria is faced with several challenges, which includes poor school facilities, inadequate funding leading to poor maintenance culture in most schools (Eze, 2016; Asiyai, 2012; Adeyemi, 2011; Obidike & Onwuka, 2013; Odu, 2011; Ogunsanmi & Ibimiluyi, 2014). According to Falade (2015) and Asiyai (2012), to achieve a good quality standard school, there must be provision for adequate management of educational facilities because it is believed that education curriculum cannot function properly under a poorly managed school facilities. To Obidike and Onwuka (2013), schools with high maintenance culture of its facilities increased students' academic success. Adirika and Oluwatayo (2013) confirmed that students that are in new and well-equipped facilities performed better than students with older and poorly equipped school facilities. They concluded that a conducive school environment is critical to effective teaching and learning. At this point, it is obvious that even the best school principal can do little or nothing under such circumstances. Especially, where schools are poorly funded with inadequate or poorly maintained school facilities, it will eventually result in a poor academic performance of the students.

The study conducted by Edho (2009) found that poor funding of schools and insufficient planning, as well as unstable government in Nigeria, hindered continuity of its educational programmes and policies. Amuchie et al. (2013), found that no educational programme can survive without adequate funding. They concluded that financing of education in Nigeria has been on the decline. However, training and retraining of principals and teachers is necessary for the growth of education in Nigeria because for any nation to experience significant improvement, training and retraining are critical to educational policy implementation (Odu, 2011). The study conducted by Osamwonyi (2016) established that there are many challenges facing education system in Nigeria. They include lack of fund, poor maintenance culture, and inadequate supervision. Similarly, Nwambam et al. (2018) established that poor educational planning is responsible for the decline in education system in Nigeria.

Theoretically, the most prominent framework that can be used to explain the wholesome adoption of education and development is human capital theory. In reference to the work of Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997); Sakamoto and Powers (1995) and Schultz (1971), the theory assumed that education is key to improve the production capacity of a population. The theory also emphasize on how education increases the adeptness of workers by increasing the level of their cognitive. Proponents of human capital theory argued that the theory provides justification for large investment in education both in developed and developing countries.

Research Objectives

1. To establish whether the objectives of UBE programme in Delta State are achieved.
2. To identify challenges militating against effective implementation of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State.
3. To suggest possible measures that can be used to ensure effective implementation of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative). The use of qualitative method (interview) is dominant in this study while quantitative method (secondary data) was used to support the qualitative method. There are reasons for the use of qualitative method to be dominant in this study. First, qualitative method provides an environment for an in-depth review of the research questions. Second, studies show that qualitative method is more flexible; create a better understanding of complex issue because it involves the interaction between participants and the researcher. For example, the use of the open-ended questions and unstructured interviews allows participants to respond to the questions differently in their words instead of a yes or no answer. Third, the method creates a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and participants especially when experience researcher is involved and applies the rules of engagement. Fourth, the method is less formal as in the case of quantitative method. Based on the above reasons, the qualitative phenomenological approach was used as the most appropriate for this research (Creswell, 2013; Turner, 2010).

Population/ Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consists of all headmasters and principals of public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Three sampling techniques (stratified, purposive and convenience sampling) were used to draw the participants for the study. First, stratified sampling technique was used to classify schools in the 25 Local Governments according to three senatorial districts (Delta North, Delta South and Delta Central) in the state. Secondly, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select Local Governments in the three senatorial districts. Thirdly, convenience sampling technique was employed to select 15 headmasters and principals from 15 primary and junior secondary schools across the three senatorial districts in the state to serve as participants in the study. For the purpose

of the study, headmasters are coded as “HM” while principals are coded as “Principal” in the analysis section.

Interview Protocol

For the purpose of the present study, we developed an interview protocol called “Interview Protocol on Perceived Measures for Effective Implementation of UBE (IPPMEI)” to inquire relevant information from the school principals. The reason for selecting principals for the study is that they are the ones responsible for the implementation of education policies, as enshrined in UBE programme. The interview protocol has 3 main questions and 9 sub-questions. The questions contained in the protocol were adapted from the studies conducted by Arong and Ogbadu (2010); Ejere (2011); Subair and Talabi (2015). Specifically, the interview questions were formulated based on the three research questions of the study. The interview protocol was given to experts in the field of Educational Management with a view to ensure that the questions contained in the protocol fits the objectives of the study. Suggestions and observations of the experts were collected and effected in the final draft of the protocol. Moreover, to ensure trustworthiness of the protocol, we conducted a pilot study with one principal in one of the secondary schools located in Delta State which was not used for the main study. The main reasons for conducting a pilot study is to ensure the reliability of the questions contained in the interview protocol before going for main data collection (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2016; Yin, 2011).

Ethical Consideration

The ethical issues associated with research studies were considered before the research was conducted to address any anticipated issues commonly found in most research studies. For the avoidance of problems between the rights of the participants’ privacy and the research objectives, participants’ protections were guaranteed while the aim of the research study was revealed to them. Furthermore, their consent to proceed and participant consent to participate in the research study was given using participants’ informed consent form. A cordial relationship was established to create room for participants’ willingness to participate in the study (Creswell, 2013).

Secondary Data

In order to get comprehensive information to investigate the study, secondary data and some documents were collected to support the interviews conducted. Specifically, data on number of teachers, availability of teaching and learning materials and other relevant data from 2012-2016 were obtained through Federal Ministry of Education 2017 Report. The essence of secondary data in this study is to support the interviews conducted.

Data Collection/Analysis Procedure

Based on suggestions of Creswell (2013) on data collection in qualitative study, interviews were conducted in all the selected schools with the assistance of two research assistants which we employed to assist us in data gathering. The interviews were conducted with the use of laptop, biro, pencil, jotter, digital audio tape recorder and camera. For quantitative part, secondary data were obtained from Federal Ministry of Education's Book on Education Indicators, Delta State Universal Basic Education Board, and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Data collected were analyzed with the use of excel word. Specifically, descriptive analysis on education indicators was examined.

Analysis

Qualitative Approach

Research Objective 1: To establish whether the objectives of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State achieved

The first research objective seeks to establish whether the objectives of Universal Basic Education Programme are achieved or not. Based on interviews conducted, the views of the school principals and headmasters clearly expressed UBE's objectives. According to Principal 1, "UBE was set up to spring up literacy and ensure that figure of out-of-school children in Nigeria is reduced". Similarly, other principals expressed their thoughts on aim ad objective of UBE programme in Nigeria:

"The purpose of establishing the UBE programme in 2000 was as to provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children of school age but some of the objectives is yet to be achieved because we still have many children that are out of school (HM 1, 5, 2 & Principal 3)."

In the case of Principal 4, he revealed that ... "The UBE programme was designed to reduce illiteracy and poverty in the nation because education is the gateway to success". According to the view of HM 3, he opined that ... "Universal Basic Education is one of the Millennium Development Goal aimed at providing equality and free basic education for children across the length and breadth of Nigeria, but we still have some children whose parents are not even of the programme." In the same vein, Principal 6 asserted that ... "Despite the replacement of UPE (Universal Primary Education) with UBE, because of the challenges associated with it, the main objective of UBE, which is to reduce the number of out-of-school children to the barest minimum (by offering free and compulsory education), is yet to be achieved."

Research Objective 2: To identify the challenges that are militating against implementation of UBE programme in Delta State, Nigeria

1. Poor Funding

Majority of the participants that were interviewed expressed a high level of disappointment over the way the UBE scheme was underfunded that no system can survive without adequate funding. According to Principal 1, in his response, he commended government for their efforts so far on education but admitted that poor funding was the primary reason why the school principals were unable to implement the UBE programme. In the same vein, HM 2 asserted that ... “Poor funding is a big issue in education but junior secondary schools under UBE are not well funded by various governments.” In support of the above, Principals 4, 5 and HM 4 are of the view that:

“There is no doubt that inadequate funding of education, especially at primary and junior secondary schools, is a serious challenge that hampers effective implementation of UBE programme in many of the schools. There is lack of fund to run junior schools efficiently and effectively, this is affecting the goals and objectives of UBE. They claimed that the terrible economic situation in the country as a result of fall in the oil price globally has also negatively impacted the scheme due to the reduction of government income from the sales of oil.”

2. Inadequate Infrastructure

Principal 1 said ... “Most government schools’ facilities in Delta State including are in poor state which also affects the implementation of the UBE scheme by the school principals.” According to HM 2 and Principal 2:

“Inadequate infrastructures, poor maintenance culture, lack of political will, instability in government and their policies. The foregoing contemporary challenges are often responsible for the inadequacy of infrastructures in majority of primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State.”

In the same vein, HM 1 is of the opinion that:

“Lack of funding in most cases has hindered the school principals from providing the needed basic school infrastructures that support teaching and learning in most Junior school within the schools in Delta State. This reason is a major challenge that has hindered the UBE scheme from achieving its objectives”.

3. Poor Maintenance Culture

On poor maintenance culture in primary and junior secondary schools, majority of the participants attributed to the challenges militating against implementation of UBE programme in Delta State. The summary of the participants' views are given thus:

"The poor maintenance culture seen in schools is as a result of corruption which is a major factor for poor maintenance of school within Warri because even when funds are provided, it is not used for the purpose it is meant for rather diverted for private use, corruption has greatly impacted negatively on the effective implementation of the UBE scheme".

4. Lack of Adequate Data

Based on interview conducted, lack of adequate date emerged as one of the challenges that hindered effective implementation of UBE programme in Delta State, Nigeria.

"Planning is very difficult when data available are inadequate for example the total number of qualified teachers not adequate; the data showing the status of school infrastructures available are inadequate. There are no adequate data showing the number of school children, number of functional science laboratory, numbers of a well-equipped school library and so on. The aforementioned reasons are some of the challenges that hindered the implementation of the UBE programme (Principal 3, 4 & HM1)."

5. Inadequate Qualified Teachers

Interview conducted reveals that inadequate qualified is one of the challenges that is affecting UBE programme. Principal 1 admitted that ... "Inadequate and lack of well-trained technical teachers and tools among others were some of the problems responsible for the poor implementation of the UBE scheme by the school principals." Similarly, Principal 6 claimed that ... "his school does not have qualified teachers for technical education, which is another major challenge in the implementation of the UBE scheme."

6. Poor Teachers' Remuneration

On poor teachers' remuneration, Principal 6 is of the view that ... "Poor wages leading to demotivation, spending longer working hours without compensation, is a huge cog in the wheel of UBE programme in both primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State." HM 4 aggressively stated that... "Poor salary and continuous delay of teachers' promotion and training killed the morale of the teachers; hence it affects the process of teaching and learning.

Additional Findings from Quantitative Approach

Secondary data obtained from the Federal Ministry of Education's School Education Indicators were analyzed with use of excel world to ensure graphical representation for easy understanding of the study. Some of the education indicators that were analyzed include ratio in (pupil/teacher ratio & pupil/classroom ratio) public primary and junior secondary schools; enrolment level in public primary (male and female enrolment) schools; enrolment level in public junior secondary schools (male and female); completion rate in public primary schools (male and female); completion rate in public junior secondary schools (male and female); statistics of primary school teachers (including qualified ones) and statistics of junior secondary school teachers (including qualified ones).

1. Ratio in Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Data collected revealed that pupil-teacher ratio in public primary school is 32 while ratio in public junior secondary school is 28. Also, pupil-classroom ratio in public primary secondary school is 57 per classroom, meaning that there is over population of pupils in classroom, which is against the UNESCO's recommendation. In the same vein, pupil-classroom ratio in public junior secondary school is 52, it implies that classroom in junior secondary school is overcrowded, therefore, it can be said that no effective teaching and learning can take place in such kind of environment. Figure 1 displayed indicate graphical representation of the data.

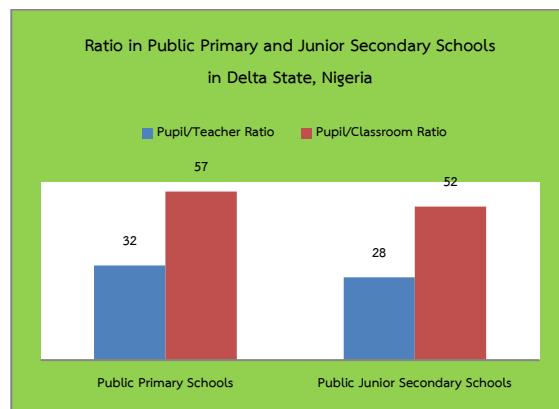


Figure 1 Graphical Representation of Ratio in Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Source: Federal Ministry of Education (2017)

2. Enrolment Level in Public Primary Schools (2012-2016)

Findings indicate that there is decline in pupil's enrolment level in primary schools from 2012 to 2016. For instance, male enrolment in 2012 is 248363 and went down in 2013 with 242401

enrolments. In 2014, enrolment level was 253461, 240405 in 2015, and 194207 in 2016. Concerning female enrolment level, findings revealed that 249989 were enrolled in 2012, 239013 were enrolled in 2013, 248288 in 2014, 238675 in 2015 and 191310 in 2016. Figure 2 displayed the trend in enrolment level in public primary schools in Delta State, Nigeria.



Figure 2 Graphical Representation of Trend in Enrolment Level in Public Primary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

3. Enrolment Level in Public Junior Secondary Schools

Like primary schools, enrolment level in public junior secondary schools in Delta State is decreasing. According to Federal Ministry of Education, on male enrolment level, 89714 were enrolled in 2012, 90593 in 2013, 92476 in 2014, 108651 in 2015, and 79740 in 2016, meaning that the total number were enrolled from 2012-2016 is 461174. On female enrolment level, 89206 in 2012, 92401 in 2013, 95499 in 2014, 110994 in 2015 and 75388 in 2016. Figure 3 below shows the trend in enrolment for both male and female category.

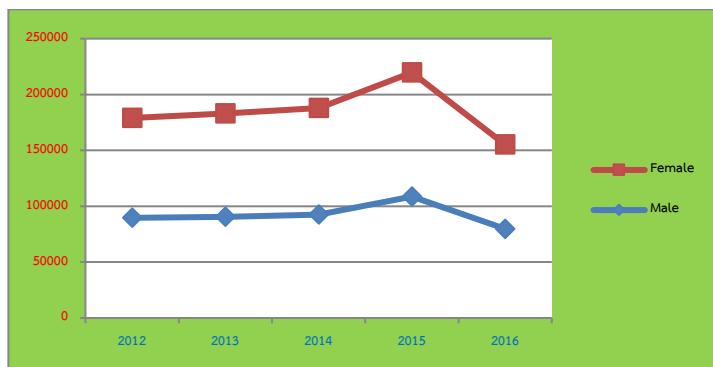


Figure 3 Graphical Representation of Trend in Enrolment Rate in Public Junior Secondary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

4. Completion Rate

Based on the data collected and analyzed, completion rate in public primary schools for male category is 43.13 while 39.48 is meant for female category. This indicates that the percentage of male that completed schools is more than female. In the same vein, completion rate in public junior secondary schools for male category is 42.74 while 39.48 represent female category. Figure 4 below signifies the graphical representation of the completion rate.

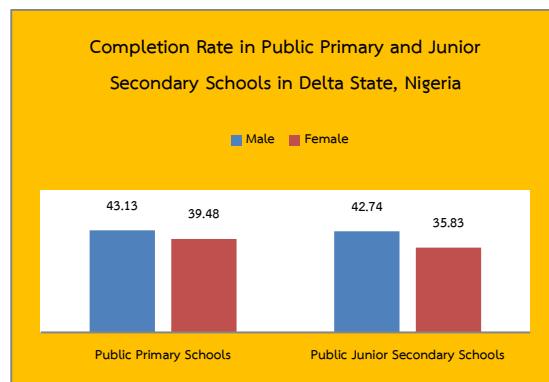


Figure 4 Graphical Representation of Completion Rate in Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

5. Statistics of Primary School Teachers

The total number of primary school teachers in Delta State is 9307 (male: 2658; female: 6649). Specifically, the number of qualified teachers in public schools is 7930 (male: 2161; female: 5769) while 1377 represents number of unqualified teachers. In view of the foregoing, therefore, it can be said that issue of unqualified teachers is a serious concern in primary schools. Figure 5 depicts the graphical representation of the statistics.

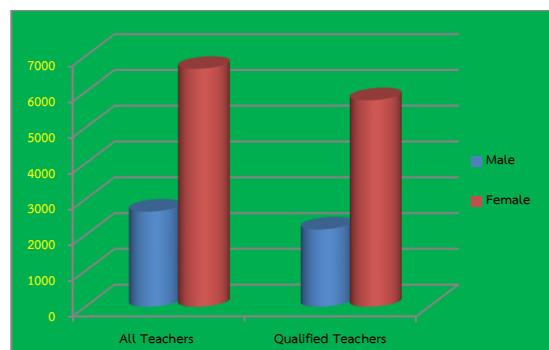


Figure 5 Graphical Representation on Statistics of Primary School Teachers in Delta State, Nigeria

6. Statistics of Junior Secondary School Teachers

The total number of junior secondary school teachers in Delta State is 11342 (male: 5245; female: 6097). Precisely, the number of qualified teachers in public schools is 5283 (male: 2311; female: 2972) while 6059 represents number of unqualified teachers. Based on findings, it can be concluded that unqualified teachers is a grave concern in junior secondary schools. Figure 6 depicts the graphical representation of the statistics.



Figure 6 Graphical Representation on Statistics of Junior Secondary School Teachers

Research Objective 3: Measures for effective implementation of UBE programme in Delta State, Nigeria

The third research objective was based on the measures that can be used to ensure effective implementation of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. In view of the interviews conducted, six measures were suggested by the participants to address the challenges militating against implementation of UBE programme. The measures are given below:

1. Adequate Data Gathering

According to Principals 1 and 6, they are of the view that... “For us to get our UBE programme right in Nigeria, Government at all levels (local, state and federal) must ensure synergy with a view to collate adequate and reliable data for the purpose of planning, budgeting and implementation stages of the programme.” Similarly, HM 3 submitted that... “Since data is needed for the growth of education, adequate and reliable data should be collected so that proper planning can be made for the successful implementation of the programme.” In the same vein, the view of Principal 5 and HM 4 are similar; they averred that... “Availability of data is panacea for the advancement of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria.”

2. Adequate Funding

According to Principal 5 and HM 2:

“No matter how good the UBE’s policy and programme are structured, if there is no adequate fund available for its implementation, the challenges of UBE will persist because the fund is needed to procure all the instructional materials and payment of teachers’ salaries constantly without any blemish.”

HM 1 opined that:

“It is a fact that most schools under UBE are underfunded, therefore adequate fund must be allocated to education sector as recommended by UNESCO so that millions of Nigerian children can be returned to school for the general growth of education in Nigeria. Specifically, since schools under UBE are the foundation where other levels of education are built on, thus constant and adequate funding of the sector cannot be compromised.”

3. Adequate Infrastructure

According to participants, adequate infrastructure is key to effective implementation of UBE policies. One of the participant’s view is given below:

“For government to achieve any significant success in UBE, infrastructure is key. Therefore, new modern facilities such as classrooms, library and clinic should be built, while existing facilities should be renovated to standard so as to ensure effective teaching and learning, and also to ensure that the aims and objectives of UBE is realized (HM 1).”

4. Adequate Teaching and Learning Materials

Concerning adequate teaching and learning, HM 1 asserted that... “Modern teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, books, novels, TV and Radio sets and other useful instructional materials should be made available in primary and junior secondary schools so that effective teaching and learning can be assured.” In the same vein, according to Principal 4, he opined that:

“Adequate provision of teaching and learning materials is key to effective learning in school. Therefore, to ensure that, modern teaching materials such as textbooks, markers, board, teaching aids, workshops and other relevant materials are needed for effective implementation of UBE programme not only in the primary and junior secondary schools in Warri Local Governments, but should be made available in the entire Delta State and Nigeria at large.”

5. Recruitment of Qualified/Adequate Teachers

School principals and headmasters believe that mass recruitment of qualified and competent teachers in junior secondary schools will help ameliorate the problems of education in

primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State. According to Principal 3, he confirmed that... “Government should embark on recruitment of qualified teachers to fill the vacant positions in both primary and junior secondary schools, most especially in rural areas where they have shortage of teachers.” In the same vein, Principal 6 opined that... “Recruitment of qualified teachers for schools is long overdue. In recruiting teachers, emphasis must be placed on science subjects (Mathematics, Integrated Science, Computer, Introductory Technology etc.) and English Language.”

6. Teachers’ Welfare

According to HM 4, he opined that... “Teachers’ welfare should be taken seriously by the government so that they can be efficient and effective in classroom.” Similarly, Principal 2 is of the view that... “Teachers’ salaries should be paid promptly so as to improve their morals, this will ensure effectiveness on their part.” Principal 5 asserted... “Training and retraining of teachers should be constant so that they can be informed of the current trends in education system.”

Discussion

The first research objective of the study was to establish whether the objectives of UBE programme in Delta State have been achieved or not. Evidence from qualitative findings revealed that the objectives of UBE in Delta State, Nigeria have been achieved to a large extent. To be specific, the programme has helped in reducing the number of out of school children to the barest minimum. Also, the programme has helped in providing free and compulsory education for all the children that has reached the age required to be enrolled in school. The foregoing is in congruent with human capital theory who assumed that education is key to improve the production capacity of a population. The theory also emphasized on how education can be used to increases the adeptness of workers by increasing the level of their cognitive. Proponents of human capital theory argued that the theory provides justification for large investment in education both in developed and developing countries. The use of education for the creation of human capital was largely responsible for differences in labour productivity and differences in technological development in the world (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1997; Sakamoto and Powers, 1995; Schultz, 1971).

The second research objective of the study was to identify the challenges that militating against effective implementation of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State. Evidence from qualitative approach revealed various challenges, which include poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor maintenance culture. Also, other challenges include lack of adequate data, inadequate qualified teachers, and poor teachers’ remuneration. In the same vein, evidence from

quantitative approach revealed disheartening statistics regarding the challenges that are confronting the implementation of UBE programme in Delta State. To start with, pupil-teacher ratio in public primary schools is 32, while student-teacher ratio in public junior secondary schools is 28. There is overpopulation of pupils in classroom. Specifically, pupil-classroom ratio in public primary schools is 57, while pupil-classroom ratio in public junior secondary schools is 52, meaning that there is decline in enrolment level. Pupil enrolment level in public primary schools from 2012-2016 is 234, 6112 (male: 1178837; female: 1167275) while student enrolment level in public junior secondary schools is 924, 662 (male: 461174; female: 463488). Equally important, there are unqualified teachers in primary schools. For instance, the total number of all primary school teachers is 9,307 (male: 2,658; female: 6,649). Number of qualified teachers in public primary schools is 7,930 while number of unqualified teachers is 1,377. There are cases of inadequate and unqualified teachers in junior secondary schools. The total number of all junior secondary school teachers is 11,342 (male: 5245; female: 6,097), the number of qualified teachers is 5,283. Number of unqualified ones is 6,059. These findings is supported with the study conducted by Edho (2009) who established that poor funding and insufficient planning, as inadequate infrastructure are the hallmarks of problems confronting the development of education in Nigeria, which has hindered continuity of its educational policies. The findings of the current study is also in tandem with the work of Amuchie et al. (2013) who found that inadequate funding has always being the bane of education system in Nigeria and that financing of education in Nigeria has been on the decline. The study of Odu (2011) concluded that inadequate training and retraining of teachers is thus responsible for the current state of education in Nigeria because for any nation to experience significant improvement, training and retraining are critical to educational policy implementation.

The third research objective of the study was to suggest possible measures that can be used to ensure effective implementation of UBE programme in public primary and junior secondary schools in Delta State. Evidence from qualitative findings revealed that there many measures that can be used to address the various challenges of UBE, which will ensure effective implementation of its policies and programmes in Delta State, Nigeria. The measures include adequate data gathering, adequate funding, adequate infrastructure, adequate teaching and learning materials, recruitment of adequate and competent teachers, and teachers' welfare. The findings is supported with the study conducted by Asiyai (2012) who concluded that to achieve a good quality standard school, adequate management of educational facilities is needed to ensure that those facilities are efficiently effectively utilized. Obidike and Onwuka (2013) established that schools with high maintenance culture of its facilities increased students' academic performance. Similarly, Adirika and Oluwatayo (2013) confirmed that students that

are in new and well-equipped facilities performed better than students with poorly equipped school facilities and that a conductive school environment is critical to effective teaching and learning.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom. One of the cardinal reasons for the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Delta State and Nigeria at large is to provide free and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child of school age group. Based on the findings, it can be said that answers have been provided to the three research questions of the study. Even though the UBE programme in Delta State has helped to enroll pupils in school, nevertheless, the number of out of school children is still high. Additionally, there are many challenges militating against effective implementation of UBE programme, they include poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, poor maintenance culture, lack of adequate data and poor teachers' remuneration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Review of UBE policy is needed to reflect the current reality in Nigerian education system.
2. In line with UNESCO's recommendation of 26% budget allocation to education, budget allocation to primary and junior secondary education should be increased by Delta State government.
3. Stakeholders in education in Delta State should assist government in the provision of adequate facilities in primary and junior secondary schools.
4. Existing facilities in the schools should be maintained regularly.
5. Adequate qualified teachers should be recruited.
6. Improvement in headmasters, principals and teachers' condition of service
7. To increase enrolment level in both primary and junior secondary schools, parents should be sensitized on the importance of education; this will help to reduce the number of out-of-school children.
8. To ensure effective learning, teacher-pupil ratio should be reduced to 25 while pupil-classroom should equally be reduced to 25.
9. Periodic training and retraining of headmasters, principals and teachers should be constant.
10. Adequate data gathering regarding primary and junior secondary schools should be collected to help in policy formulation and implementation.

Suggestions for Further Research

Even though interview and secondary data were employed for data gathering in this study, nevertheless, further studies are needed to be carried out to support or discountenance the findings of the present study. For instance, additional study is needed via survey to assess the perceived measures for effective implementation of UBE programme using teachers who are responsible for the teaching of students under UBE programme. Also, both survey and interview could be used by the future investigators to investigate the core policies of UBE programme. Specifically, teachers, principals and UBE officials could be used as respondents via for survey and interview respectively.

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