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Impact of the Universal Basic Education Policy on the Quality of Infrastructure in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the “Impact of Universal Basic Education Policy on the quality of Infrastructure in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State. The objectives of the study were: to determine the impact of UBE policy on the quality of infrastructure in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Cross Sectional Survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all the 291 Principals of the 291 Secondary Schools in the six education Zones of Enugu State. The sample size of 236 was obtained using simple random sampling technique. The major data for the study were gathered through structured questionnaire. Chi-square test statistic was used to test the hypothesis formulated. The study revealed that UBE Policy has increased the quality of school infrastructure in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State. The study recommended allocation of more funds for the provision of educational facilities in Junior secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Quality of Infrastructure, Junior Secondary School

INTRODUCTION

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy was prescribed by the revised National Policy on Education in Nigeria, which made education compulsory for all children in the country. UBE is given in the form of Nine years continued education; comprising six years primary education and three years Junior Secondary Schooling [1]. Universal Basic Education according to [1] “Is almost the same as the old Universal Basic Education Scheme. It is free and Universal like before, but now in addition, it is compulsory. The Universal Basic Education policy

stimulates learning from the early years of 3-5 which is called Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE). The UBE now extends to all children from age six to fifteen. It will devote as much attention to providing a large enough number of schools to take in all children who are eligible for enrolment in them. It embraces a comprehensive adult literacy programme. Funds will be made available for properly equipping schools”.

The above submission by [1], indicates that UBE is broader than UBSE which focused only on providing educational

opportunities to primary school. The UBE policy stresses the inclusion of everybody ready to learn, girls and women and a number of underserved group, the poor, street and working children, rural and remote population, nomads, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees and the disabled.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy is an expression of the strong desire of the government to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, reinforce participatory democracy, political consciousness and national integration [2].

The concept of basic education to [3] means laying the foundation for learning to use one's hand to produce things, learning to survive in a complex society and learning to be useful to both oneself and the entire Nigeria. [4] outlined the following as some of the minimum requirements for proper adaptation of Nigerian society through basic education, acceptance and internalization of the moral imperatives of society that will enable the society to grow, develop and live in peace;

- Ability to fend for oneself through gainful employment;
- Ability to read, write and calculate;
- Ability to communicate effectively with others;

- Ability to profit from modern technological information system and
- Ability to appreciate clean environment and understand basic health requirements.

Basic education is expected to among other things; enable the beneficiaries to exhibit full qualities of humanity in moments of personal or collective needs. Basic Education is able to effectively prepare the larger population to understand and prepare their environment, analyze the social being and transform their world into a beneficial one. [5] remarked that basic education has been conceptualised to serve two major purposes: it should serve as the foundation upon which other forms of higher education are built since a superstructure erected on a weak foundations can never stand the test of time, secondly, basic education serves as holistic package for those who cannot proceed beyond this level of education.

Basic education even though it is not too sophisticated as to make beneficiaries core professionals, it helps them consummate rewarding and fulfilling lives in terms of applied vocation skills and entrepreneurial self-discovery. Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in Nigeria has its root in trends and developments in education in the international community. According to Federal Republic of [6], UBE is part of Nigeria efforts to uphold and

renew its commitment to the provision and promotion of basic education for all as required by a number of international covenants and protocols to which Nigeria is a signatory. The 1990 World Conference in Education for all in Jomtiem Thailand as recorded in [7] position that basic education should emphasize literacy, numeracy and life skills of learning how to learn. The Declaration further states that basic education is not necessarily the same as schooling, nor does it have to take place exclusively within a school setting. Every society should according to its needs and circumstances define its own basic education package and the package itself should be context specific and should be regularly reviewed to take charge of each nation's changing political, cultural and socio-economic situation.

The scope of Universal Basic Education (UBE) according to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2001) encompasses the following:

- *Programme and initiatives for early childhood care and socialization;*
- *Educational programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skill, especially for adults;*
- *Special programme for nomadic population;*
- *Out-of-school, non-formal programmes for updating for the knowledge and skills of persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for life-long learning;*
- *Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for*

adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education;

- *The formal school system from the beginning of Primary education to the end of Junior Secondary school.*

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy is an expression of the strong effort of Nigerian government to raise the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry. Thus, to ensure effective implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria, the government set various action plans:

- *To provide free and compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.*
- *To reduce drastically the incidence of drop out from formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.*
- *To develop the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong committed to its vigorous promotion.*
- *To cater for learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision of basic education.*
- *To ensure the acquisition of the appropriate level of illiteracy, education and ethical, moral and civic values needed for building a solid foundation for long life learning (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000).*

As a way of ensuring the proper implementation of the objectives of the UBE policy, a commission was established by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 known as Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). [7], opined that UBE

is conceived as a policy with strong emphasis on all round development of its beneficiaries. He equally stressed that the UBE policy aims at cutting across all Nigerian children and adolescents in all social conditions of geographical locations irrespective of sex, in and out of formal school system.

The national office is structured into six departments namely: Planning, Research and statistics, monitoring and evaluation, teacher training and curriculum development, social mobilization, Administration and supplies and finance and Accounts [8]. Each department is headed by a director who forms the management team of UBE under the National coordinator. For administration conveniences and smooth implementation, UBE is further grouped into twelve zonal offices.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy owes its effective implementation to all the three tiers of government in Nigeria [1]. The Federal Government initiated and launched the policy. According to [9], the Federal Government provides minimum standards and guidelines for its operation: it provides general oversight and monitoring and mobilizes domestic and international support for the policy; it initiates and intervenes in critical areas of need for the success of UBE such as payment of salary arrears of primary school teachers, construction and furnishing of additional classroom blocks

in schools: it provides support for core national institutions for implementing key aspects of the policy.

The State Government formulate policies for UBE in their state; they see to the day to day running of the programme in their states; they recruit, discipline and promote teachers on grade 07 and above: they pay the school teachers; they establish and maintain State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and other state level UBE agencies. Local Governments establish and maintain local Government Education Authorities (LGEA) in their areas: they recruit, discipline and promote teachers and other primary school staff in their area.

This Universal Basic Education Policy though initiated by the federal Government, is not a federal Government project alone but also a national programme owned and executed not only by the three tiers of government but by the entire people of Nigeria including parents, teachers, communities, non-governmental organizations and interest groups [10]. [1], declared that "the implementation of this policy must be anchored at community, local and states level to ensure close involvement and supervision for success and sustenance". This can only be if there are quality infrastructure on ground for the implementation of the policy guideline.

One of the factors that led to the collapse of the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

was lack of adequate instructional and physical facilities (Nwagwu, 2006). The teaching materials make teaching more fascinating, real and enduring in the minds of the students. [11] summarized the learning environment of primary schools thus:

Today there are few primary schools with library spaces and reading materials in them. In some areas, the only noticeable laboratories are perhaps, seasonal gardens if any. In most cases, the primary school children have no building, no seats, and no books not even chalk for teachers. We are familiar with the morning and afternoon scene of children carrying their tables and chairs to and from each school day.

[10] observed that the existing facilities in most primary schools in Nigeria are grossly inadequate for smooth operation of the Universal Basic Education Policy. He lamented that most primary schools in Nigeria have no access to electricity, pipe borne water, laboratories, libraries, good quality text books, enough seats and so

on. This situation is very deplorable, as it does not enhance teaching and learning. Learning can only take place when there is the presence of conducive environment.

Various state governments have, however, contributed their own quota in the provision of facilities. [11], identified the following as some of its major areas of implementation of the UBE policy. One hundred and forty primary school blocks damaged by wind and rain storms were renovated. In addition to three thousand desks per Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in Enugu State, more pupils' desk have been provided to the schools by SPEB, interest groups and communities. The State Primary Board (SPEB) provided office of the UBE policy in the Board's headquarters. [5], reported that she released a total of one thousand, two hundred (1200) motorcycle to the State Primary Education Boards nationwide.

Based on the foregoing, the researcher got motivated to investigate the impact of the Universal Basic Education Policy on the quality of infrastructure in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study involved a cross sectional survey research design. Cross sectional design, involves the collection of data from a sample of 236 secondary schools

in all the 6 education zones of Enugu State.

Sources and Method of Data Collection

Two sources of data collection were used for this study. They are primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources: The primary data in this study were gathered through in depth interview and structured questionnaires administered on the principals of the selected secondary schools in Enugu State.

Secondary Sources: The study collected data from secondary source such Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) result records, UNICEF child friendly school model, journals, Government Publication, newspapers and internet materials which are relevant and related to the study.

Population of the Study

The population for the study consists of all the 291 Principals from all the 291 secondary schools in all the six (6) education Zones of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

The researchers used simple random sampling to select 236 principals from the 291 public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Validity of the Instrument

In this study, in order to ensure the validity of the instrument, the researchers applied content and face validation. The instrument was validated by three experts from Enugu State University of Science and Technology- one each from Public Administration, Measurement and

Evaluation and Educational Management. The validators were requested to validate the instrument in terms of, clarity of instruction to the research subjects, proper wording of the items, appropriateness and adequacy of the items in addressing the purpose and problems of the study, grammatical adequacy and relevance of the items.

To do this, the researchers gave the validators the purpose of the study, the research question and research hypothesis formulated to guide the study. After their constructive criticism, the researcher modified the instrument in line with their input.

Reliability of the Instrument

The researcher used the test-retest validity estimate to ascertain the reliability coefficient of the instrument. This the researcher did by conducting a pilot study using 10 principals of Junior Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State. This served as a similar population for the study. This exercise was repeated after an interval of two weeks. The scores obtained were analyzed using spearman correlation reliability estimate and coefficient of .74 was obtained. After evaluating the data collected from the second retest result, the researcher compared the first result with the second result. It was discovered that all of them showed consistency and therefore were reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The researchers relied on qualitative description analysis. This entails extracting meaning and making logical deductions from the already documented mass of data. According to [6] qualitative descriptive analysis basically summarizes the information generated in the research work: so that appropriate analytical methods could be used to further discover relationships among the variables. This method of data analysis is fundamentally the application of qualitative research technique in the

thorough examination and interpretation of research data.

Through the qualitative technique of data analysis, descriptive explanation was given to the data gathered during the study. The use of this method is premised on the simplicity with which it reduces, unravels and interprets relationship implicit in a given data by giving a qualitative explanation to the variable under study. Figures and tables were also used to reinforce the researcher's findings.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

UBE Policy has no effect on the quality of infrastructure in junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State

Options	Observed	Expected	Residual	Chi-square X^2	Decision
Strongly Agree	68	58.5	9.5	90.25	True
Agree	138	58.5	79.5	108.03	
Disagree	16	58.5	-42.5	30.87	-
Strongly Disagree	12	58.5	-46.5	36.96	-
Total	234			264:11	True

Source: Field survey

Decision Rule: As can be observed, the Chi-square (X^2) calculated 264:11 is > Chi-square (X^2) tabulated 7.815. Thus hypothesis 1 which states that UBE policy has no effect on the quality of school infrastructure in junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State is rejected. The result above indicates that 206 (88%) of the respondents agreed with hypothesis 1 while 28 (12%) respondents disagreed

with the hypothesis that UBE policy has enhanced the quality of infrastructure in junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

This result / finding is in agreement with the postulations of [4] that there is massive increment in school construction and renovation in Nigeria since the introduction of UBE policy. Enugu state is not left out. Enugu state in 2001

enumerated list of infrastructure and facilities required in the appropriate quality and quantity to meet the minimum standard for promotion of any meaningful teaching and learning in the state. Included in this list of infrastructures and facilities should include classroom, libraries, workshops, laboratories, toilets, water, play field and school farm. Enugu state government has also provided Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for

improving quality of education in the state. Some of the secondary schools visited like Maria Assumpta Secondary school, AkamaOghe have a well-equipped ICT unit constructed by the World Bank in conjunction with Enugu state government. In the final analysis, this study confirms that UBE policy have improved infrastructure and facilities in junior secondary schools in Enugu state although few junior secondary schools are still lacking some of these facilities.

CONCLUSION

The Universal Basic Educational (UBE) policy is home grown, it has its roots in trends and developments in education in the international community. It is envisaged that its implementation will provide Qualitative basic education to all Nigerian citizens who are ready to learn as required by a number of international covenants. Government should be committed more than before on the implementation of UBE policy to eliminate illiteracy and ignorance as a basis for accelerated national development. Education is very crucial to the

development of citizens. Nigeria however, has problems such as inequalities in access to education, an educational gap between the North and South, dwindling financial resources and inadequate infrastructures. These barriers continue to impede the effectiveness of the UBE policy. This is notwithstanding with strict adherence to the recommendation of this work, these barriers could be corrected bringing about the emergence of qualitative basic education in Enugu State in particular and Nigeria in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffered that:

The study after due consideration of the findings recommended as follows:

- (i) Infrastructures and facilities like libraries, play field, school farm and water need to be provided in

the appropriate quality and quantity in some few public schools where they are missing.

- (ii) Libraries need to be equipped with books and computers to aid students to strive for excellence individual.

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