

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Uga Margaret Oluwole, PhD

Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education
Benue State University, Makurdi,
Benue-Nigeria

Fanan Abigail Gire

Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education
Benue State University, Makurdi,
Benue-Nigeria

Abstract

Considering the valuable roles and contributions of education to an individual, social and national development, the fact remains that effective management and administration of education by competent leaders should be a national concern. This paper examines the educational management and administration of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria, by highlighting some of the challenges in the aspect of poor planning, inadequate funding, the cart before the horse syndrome, inadequate teachers' empowerment, poor school plant management and administration. To achieve the successful management and administration of UBE, efforts must be made to improve on planning and projection, adequate funding, empowerment of teachers, proper management and administration of UBE programme. Efforts must be made by relevant stakeholders in education to make management and administration of UBE more responsive to teachers by way of holistic empowerment of teachers and devising ways of combating the enormous challenges to pave way for the successful management and administration of UBE in Nigeria.

Keywords: Management and Administration, Universal Basic Education.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR
Uga Margaret Oluwole, PhD

Introduction

Education has for decades served as a yardstick for the development of nations. The Universal Basic Education is thus a programme that was introduced in a quest for an all round education of Nigerians with the aim of paving way for learners acquisition of literacy, skills and stimulation of national development as well as political consciousness. Udensi (2012) observes that the Federal government is mindful of the importance of education to the development of the Nigerian child and the nation in general, provided a blue print and guidelines to state and local government area councils on how to organise manage and implement the programme. The administration and management of UBE at the state level is vested to the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) which is charged with the responsibility for the implementation of the programme both at the state and local government areas. The board Act in the State as the co-coordinating body for the Universal Basic Education policy in line with part IV sub-section 12(1) on the compulsory, free, education (UBE Act, 2004 and other related matters). This is an indication that the Federal Government of Nigeria has not only given consent to, but has demonstrated readiness to implement the decisions reached at the Jomtien Thailand in 1990 on the right of the child to education. However, management and administration of the UBE is posed with enormous challenges in the aspect of poor planning, inadequate funding, the cart before the horse syndrome, inadequate teachers' empowerment, poor school plant management and administration. To achieve the successful management and administration of UBE, efforts must be made to improve on planning and projection, adequate funding, empowerment of teachers, proper management and administration of UBE programme. Furthermore, efforts must be made by relevant stakeholders in education to make management and administration of UBE more responsive to teachers by way of holistic empowerment of teachers, devising a way of combating the enormous challenges to pave way for the success of the UBE in Nigeria, to enhance development of individual and sustainable national development.

Concept of Management and Administration

The concepts of management and administration have been used interchangeably; however, management is wider in scope than administration. Management implies a process of administration while administration is an aspect of such process. Babarinde (2001) opines that management is the utilisation of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts which is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organising, staffing directing and controlling. Administration is however, concerned with the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of policies and decisions to fulfill a purpose. It also include the controlling of the day-today running of an organization. It is the careful and systematic arrangement and use of finance, human time, material and resources for the achievement of the specified objectives of education.

Historical Overview of Management and Administration of Education in Nigeria

Management and administration of education in Nigeria dates back to the commencement of western education in the country. According to Asema (2010), educational management and administration since inception were solely in the hands of the missionaries. This spanned between 1840 and 1887. Although, the colonial government made an educational ordinance in 1882, government was not interested in the management and administration of education. It only made grants-in-aids available to schools.

The colonial government intervention in the national education management, control and administration took place in 1887 with the promulgation of the first purely Nigerian educational ordinance between 1887 and 1960, where the colonial government and the nationalists played significant roles in the national educational management and administration. There were many educational codes policies, ordinance and commission aimed at proper management and administration of education. The country's nationalists, having recognised the roles of education as an instrument of colonial liberation, played active part in the management and administration of the country's educational system. By the time of independence in 1960, the management and administration of Nigeria education were undertaken by Nigerians themselves. This period witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies communities and individuals as well as government intervention.

The most important giant step ever taken in the management and administration of the nation's education took place in 1969 with the convention of the national curriculum conference which led to the provision of the educational document christened national policy on education in 1977 that served as a guide to the direction of the nation's educational practice. The administration of Nigerian education however, changed between the civilians and the military from 1960-1999 when the record of education industry in the country witnessed unstable educational policies, one of such was the unending structural changes of the primary level of education now embedded in the Universal Basic Education.

The primary level of education has witnessed some structural changes over time, tracing these changes, Asodike (2014) reports that the duration of primary education during the period 1926-1930 was eight years and six years in 1930-1947. In 1951 constitution, it was split into two-junior and senior, while in 1952, it was eight years duration- four years of junior primary (Infant 1, & 11; Standard I & 11) and four years of senior primary (standard III & IV). With the attainment of independence in 1960, the different Regional governments adopted various systems. While the Eastern region adopted seven years, the Northern region also had seven but with four years of junior and three years of senior primary. The Western region adopted six years of primary education, while the Federal Capital Territory and Lagos adopted eight years of primary education. In 1976, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme was introduced with six year of primary education. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme which was introduced in 1999 maintained six years of primary education and three years of their secondary education all together captured as Universal Basic Education which is the current system of education in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that these constant structural changes affects all facets of primary or basic education.

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

Universal Basic Education generally is the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. According to Adewole (2017) the Universal Basic Education has three main components-Universal, Basic and Education. 'Universal' connotes a programme that is meant for all facets of the society whether rich, poor, physically fit, disabled, brilliant, dull, regular, dropouts and every other individual that is ready to acquire knowledge. 'Basic' relates to the base, take off point, fundamental, essential, spring board, bottom line and generally the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge. These indicate that the Universal Basic Education is the foundation upon which higher education is built. It is mandatory for all

citizens to function effectively in the society. "Education" entails the transmission of knowledge. In the UBE programmes, it is expected that knowledge be transmitted to learners in its simplistic form. Education is the medium by which learners are guided towards development of abilities, attitudes, skills and values that are useful to the individual and the society at large.

Universal Basic Education according to Amuche, Asotibe and Audu (2013) was launched by the then president of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th September, 1999. The UBE programme as spelt out in the implementation guidelines had the following objectives:

- i. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- ii. Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system.
- iii. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- iv. Cater for drop outs and out of school children and adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- v. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills as well as the ethical moral and civic values needed for laying the foundation for life long learning.

Nwankwo (2016) posits that basic education which teaches literacy, numeracy and encourages cognitive, affective and social development is a pedagogic experiences shared in one form or another by majority of human beings. Basic education remains the formative and lasting aspect of education no matter what level of education an individual acquires. This is because it is at the basic education level that learners have the greatest power to effect positive life altering changes.

Management and administration of Universal Basic Education is vested with the task of facilitating a redesigned programme in such a way that learners will acquire functional literacy, communication skills and vocational education. Asodile (2014) points that UBE programme was structured to be basically compulsory to all children who will be provided with free uniforms, books and free lunch.

A close look at the aforementioned views reveals that management and administration of Universal Basic Education ought to provide a life-long learning foundation that will culminate into individual and national development, hence UBE is aimed at ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills as well as ethical, moral and civic values among other laudable objectives penned down. Universal Basic Education in Nigeria which is now advocated to anchor functional education for sustainable national development as Okonkwo (2011) suggests remains an issue for concern due to the enormous challenges posed to the management and administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

Challenges of Management and Administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

Educational can be described as an instrument per excellence for ensuring national development. Universal Basic Education can enhance this development that will be sustainable through effective management and administration. Ebuara, Ekpo and Edet (2015) posit that the provision of management and administration at all

educational systems is the responsibility of both the local, state and federal government. However, management and administration of the Universal Basic Education is poised with some of these challenges:

- i. **Poor Planning:** Planning by way of setting in advance strategies, policies, procedures, programmes and standards through which educational objectives can be achieved is very often than not neglected or done untimely. Amechie, Asotibe and Audu (2013) observe that proper planning has been found to be the root of the success of every educational policy or programme. However, Nigeria is known for inadequate planning especially in the area of education. The universal primary education programme of the past suffered a set back due to poor planning. Nwanko (2016) in the same vein attests that poor planning was one of the factors responsible for the failure of UPE in the past, same trend of poor planning followed the introduction of the UBE making management and administration of UBE a difficult task to attain.
- ii. **Inadequate Funding:** Adequate funding as used here entails a timely supply of funds to pay administrators qualified teachers, provide the ideal school plant and other relevant materials required for effective teaching and learning. The success or otherwise of educational programme depend to a great extent on the level of financial support in place. Ebong (2006) indicates that financial resources are made of monetary inputs into a system such as the education system. Without availability of funds and proper management to carry out any work at the universal basic level, efforts of managing and administering UBE programme are bound to fail. Funding issues in Universal Basic Education plays a crucial role in determining the level of success, development and change. It also helps to direct attention towards the achievement of set goals at all levels of education.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) states that education is an industry that attracts huge capital outlay. Universal Basic Education is a social service that requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of Government for proper execution of educational programmes,

- iii. **The Cart before the Horse Syndrome:** A major feature of educational management in Nigeria is process disorder. For example in most cases, educational planning efforts normally start after implementation. Political leaders make public pronouncements about educational policies or programmes without any regard to due process. In situations like this, plans are never made for implementation resources. The result then is failure. Wali (2017) reports that this kind of situation ushers in failure of the laudable educational policies in theory. The cart before the horse syndrome has greatly been a challenge for the successful management and administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

iv. **Inadequate Teachers Empowerment**

Teachers are the fore front liners in education hence; they have direct influence on learners, a task which demands adequate measures to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination of teachers. First Veritas Education (2013) attests that, any government who wants to improve on its education services must put premium importance to teacher empowerment through appropriate training as well as making available to them tools that are relevant to modern learning. The Guardian (2017) rightly posits that a society that refuses to empower teachers will only be promoting ignorance. However it can be observed that the Universal Basic Education teachers are not adequately empowered as they seem not to keep pace

with technological changes and operate under very pathetic conditions such as; inadequate salaries, overcrowded classrooms, lack of promotion and increment, obsolete materials for teaching/learning and others. Teachers need to be empowered with skills which will enable them identify their own problems and seek solutions to these problems. As at present, it can be observed that the Federal Government has posted many N-power teachers to UBE study centers without adequate training regarding teaching and learning at the basic level.

- v. **Poor School Plant Management and Administration:** Physical facilities play important role in teaching and learning especially at the Universal Basic level when the sense of imagination is still premature. Asodike (2014) reveals that the availability of adequate school building, classrooms, chairs and other facilities are necessary to the attainment of objectives of an educational system. However the increase in school enrolment at this level does have corresponding increase in infrastructural development in schools. A common scene at the universal basic level is that of half completed or dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms lacking basic equipment and facilities with unhygienic toilets. The Universal Basic Education which cuts across primary and junior secondary level of education has been introduced without any positive re-structuring of the school plant. Attempts to improve are just renovations of old structures; this makes it difficult for management and administration to administer the Universal Basic Education effectively.

Prospects of Management and Administration of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria

The following prospects can aid relevant education stakeholders in effective management and administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria:

- i. **Adequate Planning and Projection:** The UBE programme should be properly planned and adequate projection should be made in terms of expected enrolment, required teachers, infrastructures needs and equipments.
- ii. **Funding:** The UBE programme should be properly funded. The funds so provided should be properly utilised for sustaining the programme. Accurate projections and effective cost analysis should be enhanced to avoid under-funding. The expenditure should be properly monitored to avoid wastage of scarce resources and embezzlement.
- iii. **Empowerment of Teachers:** We are living in a changing world and the teachers meant for the UBE programme need to keep pace with fast technological changes. To effectively achieve this, the teachers need to be trained and retrained regularly so that the content method and instructional materials may not turn obsolesces. Moreover, teachers' welfare should be a priority towards effective management and administrators of UBE.
- iv. **Proper Management and Administration of the UBE Programme:** The various levels of the programme should be properly supervised and coordinated. There should be a link and continuity in the education programme. Curriculum planners are therefore encouraged to come up with a regular programme review which will reflect the societal needs thereby linking the school to the society.
- v. **Training and Re-Training of Managers and Administrators:** Adequate efforts should be made by the Ministry of Education towards regular training and re-training of managers and administrators on all the issues surrounding UBE program for them to facilitate proper implementation.

Conclusion

Management and administration of Universal Basic Education had a faulty foundation hence there was no proper planning before pronouncement and subsequent implementation. However educational managers and administrators who are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring implementation of educational programmes, which are politically anchored policies, are posed with several challenges of poor planning, inadequate funding and others. Ensuring adequate planning and implementation, improving on funding and others may thus be a stitch in time, for a successful management and administration of Universal Basic Education that will not just be useful for individual development but for sustainable national development at large.

Suggestions for Effective Management and Administration of UBE in Nigeria

The following suggestions are made towards an effective management and administration of UBE in Nigeria:

1. Seminars and workshops should be organised to sensitise administrators, teachers, parents and communities on the need for the UBE programme.
2. The entire management and administration of the nation's education should be in the hands of professionals and experts in the education. In other words, political favoritism should be avoided, if standard and quality is to be put in place. Leadership should not be on popularity context but must involve administrators with managerial skills, principles, and abilities to make the right decisions to rise above the present standard of education.
3. Adequate funds must be put into the programme. The required level of participation from the Federal, State, Local government and other agencies in terms of funding must be clearly specified and adhered to.
4. Efforts must be made by relevant stakeholders in education to make management and administration of UBE more responsive to teachers by way of a holistic empowerment of teachers.
5. The UBE commission therefore must devise a way of cutting down these ills as identified by scholars; otherwise the hope of Nigeria implementing UBE as an instrument for national development will remain a myth.

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