

Assessment of Basic Education and Its Challenges in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The goal of Universal Basic Education is a vision worthy to sustain veritable development in the society especially in areas that lack relevance due to poor educational facilities and paucity of funds. Basic education provides avenue for it to keep the government and its people enlightened to ensure that acceptable societal values and developmental steps are taken to sustain a life of economic productivity. However, inspite of the laudable intention of government to promote basic education, a lot of challenges are still visible. These ranges from poor funding on the part of government to inadequate facilities in schools, shortage of teachers as well as incompetence on the part of educators in primary and secondary schools. This study therefore seeks to examine the current state of the State Universal Basic Education Board in facilitating basic education in Osun State, Nigeria towards fostering national development vis-à-vis the challenges being faced by the Board in achieving the goal of basic education. Data were sourced from books, journals, newspapers, and government publications using desktop research approach and analytical methods. Findings showed tremendous achievement by the SUBEB except for the challenges of shortage of teachers, non-readiness of teachers to go to rural areas, which are being addressed. The study concluded that SUBEB should not rest in its efforts at ensuring provision of sound basic education in Osun State.

Key words: Education; Basic education; Challenges; Universal education; SUBEB

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INTRODUCTION

Education is bedrock of advancement in rescuing nations from the clutch of primitive ideology. Kingdom and Maekae (2013) referred to education as a tool of development. The implication of this is that national development solely depends on the level of enlightenment that exists in the society. Consequent upon this, many countries most especially the western world sees education as key to their economy. Little accounts for several millions of United States Dollars pumped into the education sector in these developed countries. The outcomes are exhibited through formulation and implementation of policies in the sector. The translation of these policies into evident educational administration and infrastructure have proven the need for reviewing the intricacies of the success or state of education in developed countries with that of Africa, precisely Osun State, Nigeria.

Every modern society needs some educational policies to guide it in the process of such initiation. Education policy consists the principles and government intentions in the educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules to govern the operations of education system in any country. Therefore, education policy can directly affect the recipient of education at all ages and levels. Examples of areas commonly subjected to debate in education policy specifically include school size, class size, school choice, school privatization, tracking, teachers' selection, education and certification; teachers' pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation

requirements, school infrastructure investment; and the values that schools are expected to uphold and model. Educational policy covers all levels of education ranging from early childhood education to university level. It seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the objectives that it is designed to attain, the methods for attaining them and the tools for measuring their success or failure.

In order to attend to these concerns, there was a 56th General Assembly held by the United Nations to address the millennium development goals of which education ranked second. The outcome of the meeting led to the introduction of Universal Basic Education by the Nigeria Government to provide education for all within a defined period. The attention is drawn from a background where Nigeria also has a formulated National Education Policies which has been reviewed periodically to improve the sector. Part of this policy is the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy by the Federal Government aimed at making education accessible to all and sundry via an agency known as Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in 2004 and establishment of similar outfits in all States of the federation. It covers funding to make sure that education is provided to all free at all levels and made compulsory for children who are of school age. World Bank Group (2015) stated that:

UBE policy focuses on improving both formal and non-formal schooling in primary and junior secondary schools, promote functional education such as adult literacy education and education for school-age children of nomads and migrant fishermen. The main goal of the program is to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness, and national integration (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 14)

Furthermore, the compulsory, free Universal Basic Education ACT 2004 specified in Section 2 that governments at all levels shall make provision for free compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary, school age. In addition, parents shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes primary school education; junior secondary school education, by endeavouring to send the child to primary and junior secondary schools. The ACT made provision for the establishment of State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) in each State of the Federation whereby its function and structure is determined by the State legislation. This ACT shows the intention of government to provide quality as well as sustainable education for the inhabitants of the country. The expectation of government is to eradicate illiteracy, poverty and ignorance from the society, and promote national awareness to political issues in order to facilitate national unity and development (Ogunniran, Isuku & Hou, 2019).

However, there are still contending issues ranging from identification of educational philosophy, poor

infrastructure and actualization of the goals of the Universal Basic Education policy. It is argued that the Federal Government of Nigeria who ought to be a major stakeholder in the policy implementation has reduced itself to the role of an assistant in such a crucial aspect of national development. This is having a rippling effect on the growth of education in the nation particularly in Osun State where there have been policy somersaults. The State of Osun has come out to proffer policies towards improving the state of education in the communities within its territory. Amongst these policies were those proffered by the Aregbesola's Administration which proscribed the 6-3-3-4 national system and adopted 4-5-3-4 system, merged male and female schools together, suspended early childhood development education, and introduced one school uniform for all students in the State (Alabi, 2020).

Quite a lot of public outcries were generated after the implementation of this policy agenda. Many schools found it difficult to comply with, private schools also refused to come to agreement with the policy decision. Howbeit, there were accolades to areas of infrastructural development in terms of construction of new schools with facilities adequate to cater for the number of schools. Nonetheless, the infrastructural development called for questions such as: what is the relevance of the gargantuan projects in the communities? The choice of Osun State as a study area is borne from the report of UNESCO (2012) where the State was ranked as the second literate State in the whole federation yet it cannot boast of having adequate education facilities.

The scope of this study will be on the Nigerian education system structure which covers 6 years of primary education, 3 years of Junior Secondary Education (Basic Education of 9 years; and Post-Basic Education of 3 years in Senior Secondary Schools.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Arising from the background of the study, education is a basic need of mankind and essential for human development in attaining a social and balanced stability in promoting moral health of the nation. The formulation of educational policies indicates the interest of government as well as concerned authorities and stakeholders in reflecting the robust contributions of education to health, morality, literacy, welfare and productivity of individuals. These policies seek to ensure that Nigerians have access to affordable basic education irrespective of tribe and religion. These policies have introduced innovations that are considered adaptable to making basic education accessible to all Nigerians in line with global focus.

The efficacy of education to human existence reflects in the sustainability of societal development. It is the pivotal of basic progress in psychological, intellectual and financial achievement. These necessitated policy agenda

to facilitate the actualization of this goal. However, the education policy agenda implemented by Osun State from 2010 to 2018 has raised doubts, fears and confusion to the society at large. The issue of one school uniform caused an uprising especially in the public schools which made it difficult to identify their students. Other challenges ranging from readjustment of school curriculum and teaching methods were also focus of public debate and questions. Those have brought the attention of researchers to delve into appraising the education policy agenda of Osun State to ascertain its implications on societal development particularly, schools and public administration.

However, for the past years, the problem of poor education in terms of infrastructure, availability of quality teachers, inadequate basic structures and lack of decent school environment has persisted in the education system. These are evident in areas where development is at a crawling state like parts of northern Nigeria and less economically viable States in the western part such as Osun State. Various allusions have been made, which includes inadequate financing, poor treatment of teachers, inefficiency in the public school service.

In spite of government's commitment to the implementation of basic education, quality education still constitutes a major challenge confronting the people of Osun State. The current educational facilities in the state are inadequate. The nature of educational challenge in Osun State is qualitative, a general huge shortage of basic educational facilities, and high teacher-student ratio. Despite several reviewed educational policies yet, sustainable education for all still appears to be mirage to the inhabitants. The strength and feasibility of the policies as proclaimed by the advocates is yet to be seen or actualised. This is not unconnected with the fact that policy outcomes sometimes deviate from expectations. This deviation is often caused by improper implementation. This may be due to absence of functional framework to implement the policies. Indeed, Nigeria normally comes out with educational policies that are sound and perceived achievable but these education policies are often rubbished by their mode of implementation. Therefore, it gives a wrong notion about the formulated policy. Therefore this study critically examines basic education and its challenges in the State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the current situation of basic education in Osun State, Nigeria?
- What are the challenges facing the Board in achieving the goal of basic education in Osun State, Nigeria.

STUDY AREA

Osun State is in the Southwestern part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, bounded by Ondo and Ekiti States to

the east, to the north is Kwara State, to the south is Ogun State and to the west is Oyo State. The State is named after river Osun. The State was created on 27 August, 1991. The State is inhabited by different tribes but basically occupied by the Yorubas. Their major work is farming, trading and other commercial activities. This accounts for the need to promote education in these areas particularly the rural areas. Unfortunately, the State is ranked amongst one of the poorest States in the federation (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). With this, it will suffice to examine the practice of Universal Basic Education vis-a-vis the challenges in implementing the policy.

METHODOLOGY

This paper utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were retrieved through on the spot assessment by observations and secondary data were collected from National Education Policy, Universal Basic Education ACT 2004, other government policy documents, journals, books and newspapers. Data collected were discussed against reconnaissance survey, experiences and relevant literature on the subject matter. This paper is analytical.

CURRENT SITUATION OF BASIC EDUCATION IN OSUN STATE

In realization of the important role which education plays as an instrument used to ensure national development and globalization, there has been agitations to achieve more functional, qualitative and quantitative education all over the world. This agitation and concern for quantity and quality education is reflected in the inauguration of Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1995 and Dakar in 2000. This was followed by a meeting called by the 56th General Assembly of the United Nations to discuss the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this regard, investment in education in Nigeria especially at foundation level becomes imperative to curb high level of illiteracy in the country. This is the main reason the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in 1999 to provide greater access to all and sundry in the society. UBE is the most recent educational reform in Nigeria aimed at universalizing or equalizing educational opportunities to all Nigerian citizens irrespective of real or imagined disability and according to his/her ability particularly to school-going aged children. This type of education is referred to as basic education which is given to children from age 6-15 at the base level of primary to JSS 1-3. In pursuit of laudable education objectives, State Universal Basic Education has recorded the following achievements in Osun State;

Funds Disbursement

It is the responsibility of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to oversee the prompt disbursement of funds channeled by the government into the education sector. This is because the commission goes a long way to ascertain the current situation of the educational system and thus, channel available funds to appropriate quarters to ensure greater achievement of education including Osun State.

Provision of Basic Education Facilities

It is the responsibility of the UBEC to ensure that basic facilities that will ease teaching and learning process are provided for use. This is only made possible through its series of projects supplies (materials and human) and inspections and supervision aimed at knowing the true status of educational in all state including Osun.

Advising the Federal Government

The universal basic education commission helps the government in decision making, through the art of giving timely information to the government for good policymaking.

Timely Intervention in the Education Sector

It has become a major role of the UBEC to timely intervene on issues of serious concern in the sector. Ranging from the provision of instructional materials to erection and renovation of dilapidated structures, the universal basic education commission has done nobly in this wise across the states of the federation including Osun.

Routine Accreditation of Teaching/Non-teaching Staff

It is the responsibility of the universal basic education commission to routinely ensure accreditation of the teaching and non-teaching workforce in the education sector. This is to ensure that teachers are highly qualified so they deliver the best to the students while competing fairly with the international community. In all, UBEC has played a major role in restructuring the basic educational system in Nigeria. Over the years, the commission has lived up to expectation consonance with its mandate.

Human Resource Development

UBEC in collaboration with states SUBEB has recorded a huge success in this area through its referred Teachers Professional Development Programme (TPDF). With this, several thousand have been trained and particular in Osun State but through counterpart funding. This in no measure has aided in terms of quality improvement of teachers' ability, skills, knowledge and disposition to the job.

Pre-primary Education

The philosophy of catch them young has been embraced by the UBEC via introduction of pre-basic education into Nigerian schools. Of particular interest is Osun State

where it has been embraced and sustained throughout the senatorial districts. This is equally aided with OYES meal introduced in the state with the sole intention of supporting nutritional development of learners.

Teacher-Pupil Ratio

Despite the economic and financial situation of the State of Osun, it has been succeeded in maintaining a fair teacher-pupil ratio. Data available has it that in some area of the state, emphasis is on ratio 1-25 and this is observable in the three senatorial districts. This in no measure has promoted teachers' health, better understanding of teaching/learning processes and enhance interpersonal relations between learners and their teachers.

CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION

Despite the invaluable of contributions of SUBEB, the board also faces the following challenges while implementing the policy objectives;

Inadequate Fund: Funding is an important aspect of education. Just as any other organisation cannot carry out its functions effectively and achieve its goals efficiently without adequate financial resources at its disposal, so does school organisation. Obe (2009) posited that inadequate funding will bring about low standards of education as it will be difficult to construct school buildings, procure the needed equipment, settle staff' salaries and allowances, maintain the entire school plants and ensure continuity in the provision of educational services. In Nigeria, the major source of finance for education is the annual allocation disbursed to the education sector, it is disheartening to note that the allocation to education over the years, which UBE largely depends on has been consistently little and insufficient inspite of the importance of the sector to the nation especially as it relates with training and building educational background for young lads.

Inappropriate Curriculum: A curriculum is defined as the sum total of all the experiences which learners are exposed to under the guidance of school which is aimed at bringing about a relatively permanent change in the behaviour of learners in the desired direction (Ige, 2013). Curriculum development in the history of Nigeria's educational system is traceable to the 1969 National Curriculum Conference where Nigerians from all works of life were summoned together to fashion out the most appropriate curriculum for the nation. This happened right after the educational system handed down by the colonial governments was publicly criticized and condemned. The outcome of the conference led to the enactment of the first Nigeria's education policy document National Policy on Education in 1977, which contains the education curriculum and its procedures for implementation. The NPE and the curriculum has from then been undergoing

series of review and particularly, basic education curriculum over the years. Nonetheless, the curriculum is still encumbered with lots of inadequacies which has been criticized and needs to be reviewed for better improvement (Ige, 2013).

Inadequate and Poor State of School Facilities:

The provision of school facilities in the right quality and quantity is very essential for the attainment of educational goals. School facilities are resources that allows for effective delivery of instruction in schools, thereby making teaching and learning possible. Meanwhile, the poor state and inadequate provision of these facilities have made learning a difficult task for learners. Examples include: classroom blocks, staff blocks, toilet blocks, laboratories, libraries, workshops, school fields, furniture, textbooks etc. Education provision in Nigeria has been bedeviled with the problem of inadequate facilities. A report by the Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) established that while many infrastructures and facilities provided in Nigeria primary schools remain grossly insufficient, many more of those facilities are in poor condition, thus hindering the attainment of the school goals. This problem persists still in most primary schools in the country and as result, teaching and learning take place under unconducive environment, with unavailability of basic teaching aids to ensure the attainment of educational objectives.

Inadequate and Low-Quality Teachers: Human resources to any organisation is what blood is to the body. This underscores the importance of teachers in the school organisation. Teachers are the pillars on which the pedal of educational system hinges. According to Fadipe (2003), teachers are the essential and most important inputs of the educational system apart from the pupils simply because they are the drivers (implementers) of the curriculum and have a great deal of influence on the quality of the educational output. In support of this assertion, the National Policy on Education (2004), affirmed that the quality of the teachers determines the greatness of the educational system. Despite the important contribution of teachers to the education sector, UBE in Nigeria faces challenge of inadequate and supply of teachers.

Demography Pressure: The high population growth rate of Nigeria and her large size put a great strain on available resources because provision of educational facilities to remote locations, especially the rural populations of the country, most of which lack access roads, has great financial implications. The issue of population control has so far not been seriously addressed.

Improper Management Strategy: The size and diversity of the country's population create the need for a decentralized approach to education administration and management. In spite of the existence of the three tiers of government, the structure of the Federation and the creation of the UBEC at "the centre" Schools Management Boards at the State level, Local Government

Education Authorities (LGEAs) at the local government level, decentralization in its true nature has never really occurred. Federal and State Governments continue to have control over schools in terms of policy and programme imitation, yet local governments lack adequate planning and management capacity. Some of the key political decisions involved in genuine decentralization such as capacity building, autonomy, responsibility-sharing, as well as social participation, and accountability are yet to be actualized.

CONCLUSION

Having assessed basic education and efforts made by the State Universal Basic Education Board towards providing quality education, it is obvious that government's commitment is not encouraging. Though the Board has contributed in areas of selection, recruiting and accreditation of teachers as well as disbursement of allocated funds, yet there is still clamour for more quality hands to be on deck. However, it is expedient to commend the good intentions behind universal basic education policy, but unfortunately these intentions are yet to be adequately achieved. Hence, there is need for urgent steps to be taken by the Board to bring about effective and efficient implementation of basic education policy thrust in order to remove the clog in the wheel of progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

- Osun State Government should increase the subventions given to education in the State. The Board should have money at its disposal to embark upon consistent revitalisation of the basic education. These subventions should be reviewed annually in order to meet up with the challenge of inflation that has led to devaluation of Nigeria currency (Naira).

- Government should make embark on recruitment of more qualified teachers. In addition to this, the serving teachers and the new ones should undergo series of training and retraining in order to be abreast with modern facilities accruing to education generally.

- The issue of population control may be quite a task to handle by government, nevertheless government can embark on rigorous public enlightenment to educate the public on the need to engage in family planning having the motion that such will help the children to get the best education desired.

- There should be a target by government in terms of provision of infrastructure and other necessary facilities to help promote and create the desire among the public on the need to pursue education. These provisions will also make education smooth and progressive.

- The State universal education board should be given more power to act by making them relatively autonomous. This will help the board to act fast when needed without allow bureaucratic bottlenecks to impede roles in sustenance of basic education.

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