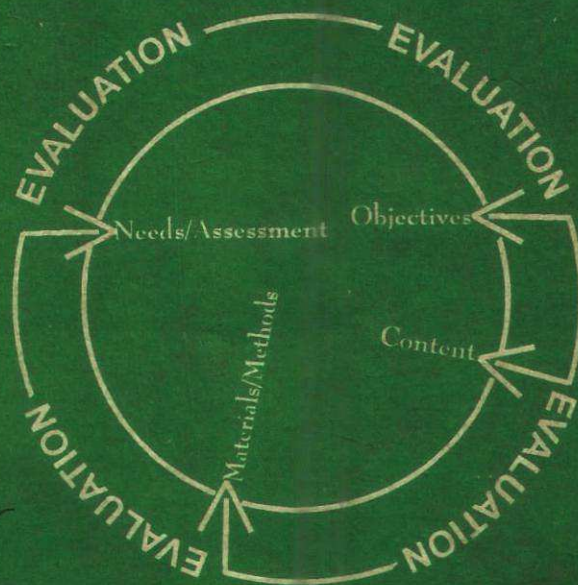


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# REFLECTIONS ON RELEVANT POLICIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN JUNIOR SCEONDARY SCHOOLS

BY

EKONG, A.O.

University Of Uyo, Uyo.

## Abstract

*This paper discusses the relevant policies that relate to the junior secondary school and the Universal Basic Education. Specifically it reflects on the National Policy on Education and the junior secondary, the Universal Basic Education and the junior secondary schooling as well as policy challenges of implementation of Universal Basic Education in the junior secondary level of education.*

## Introduction

Education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. The federal government of Nigeria (1998) declares that a nation's policy on education is a way of realizing that of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. A policy can be described as an articulated plan that incorporates the details and operational guidelines for a designed programme of scheme. It is a prepared guide that contains the philosophy, aims, goals, objectives, contents and the activities toward the realization of set objectives. It also provides direction for continuity and sustainability of the programme or scheme. The government plans to universalize education in the country from September 2000 under the scheme: Universal Basic Education (UBE). The scheme is programmed to cover the primary and junior secondary for all children, including nomadic literacy and non-formal education.

The problem of education in Nigeria has never been how to conceive the idea and planning for, but that of implementation, continuity and suitability probably due to policy defects. This paper therefore, reflects on relevant policies- the national Policy on Education and the UBE scheme blueprints and the challenges of implementation of the UBE in junior secondary schools.

## THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION AND THE JUNIOR SECONDARY PROGRAMME

A reflection on the Nigeria's national policy on education third edition section 4(18-20), as articulated by the Federal Government (1998) presents policy statements on the junior secondary school as summarized below:

- It is the first three- year stage of the six-year secondary school education.
- The curriculum is pre-vocational and academic.
- The curriculum content incorporates subjects designed to Ensure students acquisition of further knowledge and rudiments of skills. The subjects are categorized into group A, B, and C.

### Group A

**The Core (Foundation) Subjects** (Eight in number)



Comprising English, French, Mathematics, language of the environment, one of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, Integrated science, Social Studies and Citizenship Education and Introductory Technology.

#### Group B

#### Pre-vocational Electives (Five in number)

These are the subject options that would prepare the minds of the students towards future vocational interest. They include Agriculture, Business Studies, Home Economics, Local Crafts, and Computer Education. The teaching emphasis is on the practice as a component of the teaching – learning activities.

#### Group C

#### Non-Vocational Elective (five in number)

These are the general subject options for the acquisition of general knowledge, preparation for the spiritual, moral, social, health, aspects and so on. They include Religious Knowledge, Physical and Health Education, Fine Arts, Music and Arabic studies. Students are to study a minimum of Ten and maximum of Thirteen subjects to graduate from the junior secondary level. The 10 and/or 13 subjects required should comprise all eight core subjects and at least one from Groups A and B.

#### After the Junior Secondary Level – What Next?

The question that bothers after students' graduation from the junior secondary level is how to utilize the products (graduates). The broad goals of secondary education in the country are:

- To prepare the individual for useful living within the society; and
- To prepare the individual for higher education.
- To realize the above goals, the policy provides for streaming (categorization) into any of the following:
  1. The senior secondary school (for preparation for higher education).
  2. The technical college, for preparation for acquisition of technical skills and which could be developed for at the education level.
  3. An out of school vocational training centres, for the acquisition of vocational skills for occupational engagements.
  4. An apprenticeship scheme. This would be an informal out of school training in chosen trades for those who may not have ability for further academic training.

#### THE CRITERIA FOR STREAMING

Streaming of the products of the junior into any of the four options (senior secondary, technical college, vocational training or apprenticeship programme) shall be based on defined criteria:

##### 1. Transition ratio.

The ratio specifies the percentage of JSS products to proceed to any of the streamed options. The National policy on Education (1998) specifies 60:20:10:10

60% - senior secondary education

20% - technical colleges



- 10% - vocational training
- 10% - apprenticeship training

## 2. Tests and Examination Results.

The various tests and examinations will be used to determine three basic characteristics of the students namely:

- The academic ability (scholarly ability)
- The aptitude (fitness, readiness, capacity, talent)
- Vocational interest (occupation interest).

The National Policy on Education articulates clear and definite statements on the junior secondary education but the issue for consideration is the accommodation of this level of education in the universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme.

## THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND THE JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in the country, according to Obanya (2000), draws from the lessons of the national and international antecedents. He stressed the most important of the international lessons are that from Jomtien Declaration and Framework for Action on Education for AD 1990 with defined goals, of which Nigeria was a signatory. The Jomtien goals place emphasis on Basic Education, from such perspectives as:

- A process
- The skills acquired
- Foundation level of education with emphasis on literacy, numeracy, basic life skills, learning to learn skills.
- Actual learning with less emphasis on repetitions and drop-outs.
- Essential component of a broad-based policy of inclusive education.

The Jomtien goals provide the basis for the philosophy of the Universal Basic Education in the country which emphasize the laying of the foundation life-time learning for all sections of the population, whatever their condition on life. This informed the development of aims, goals and objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) as outlined in the Implementation Blueprint 2000.

### Aims of UBE

To equip individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them perform role such as:

- Living meaningful and fulfilling lives
- Contributing to the development of the society
- Deriving maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society
- Discharging civic obligations competently.

### The Goals of UBE

- To universalize access to basic education.
- To engender a conducive learning environment.



- To eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time.

### **The Specific Objectives of UBE**

The activities of the UBE will be directed towards achieving the following specific objectives:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- Providing free, compulsory universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school-going age;
- Reducing drastically, dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;
- Catering for dropouts and out-of-school children, adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life long learning.

### **Coverage of the UBE Scheme**

The scheme will cover the following:

- Formal basic education spanning the first nine years of schooling (six years primary and three years junior secondary schooling) for all children.
- Nomadic education for school age children of pastoral nomads and migrant fishermen; and
- Literacy and non-formal education for out of school children, youths, illiterate adults.

The component covers the provision of formal basic education at the junior secondary level (JSS). But the pertinent question that raises an issue is – The JSS has been provided for and well articulated in the national policy on education (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) 1998 and has also formed the components of the UBE, how prepared are the stakeholders for its implementation? Tackling the issue raised poses policy challenges for clarifications to ensure successful implementation.

### **POLICY CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

The policy challenges are the issues yet not cleared and to be cleared. In relation to the UBE implementation at the junior secondary level of education, the challenges include:

- The blending of the philosophy of Nigerian education with the Jomtien goals form, which the UBE draws form.
- The formulation of the national policy on universal basic education to define the junior secondary school in the UBE scheme.
- Integration of the components of the junior secondary school specified in the national policy on education 1998 in the UBE scheme.
- The provisions for accommodating the products of junior secondary school into the senior secondary, technical colleges, vocational training and apprenticeship training in the UBE scheme.
- The relevant data for accommodating the junior secondary school in the UBE such as:



1. The number of students needed as foundation students and prepared for.
  2. The number of teachers needed nationally.
  3. The facilities and so on.
- The training and re-training of teachers for updates in the pre-vocational and academic requirements of the junior secondary level in the context of the UBE.
  - The source of derivation and the caliber of students for the junior secondary other than the first batch of UBE primary school products expected by 2005/2006.
  - The management implications of starting the primary and junior secondary level UBE programmes at the same time.
  - The relevance of existing curriculum of the junior secondary level in the context of the universal basic education.
  - The modalities and strategies for ensuring continuity and sustainability of the universal basic education junior secondary school programme.
  - Stand by emergency remedies in case of student population explosion at the take-off of the UBE with its inherent problems.
  - The provisions for the core, pre-vocational and non-prevocational subjects in terms of learning materials and adequacy of manpower.
  - As a national programme, the standardization of quality of UBE in junior secondary schools nationwide.

## CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of the universal basic education programme in the junior secondary school is of great concern to stake holders. With the talking off of the programme by September, 2000 nationally and at all levels, a lot of challenges predicative of the implementation at the junior secondary school level have been articulated in this paper and which have to be cleared to ensure success.

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