

## An Historical Assessment of the Implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria, 1992-2002

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**Abstract:** This study examined Basic Education in Nigeria. The study adopted historical research method in which the investigator relied heavily on primary source of data gathering. In addition, both secondary source of data gathering and structured interviews were used. The study revealed that Basic Education brought about an increase in the pupils enrolment within the period of study. It also showed that the percentage of qualified teachers within the period of study increased. The pupil/teacher ratio in the country is still very high as against the National Policy on Education. The government budget on education is still very low as a result of which basic education in the country has not been fully implemented. The study also identified some of the problems facing the full implementation of basic education in Nigeria. Such problems include: Poor education statistics inadequate publicity, inadequate funding of education, religion particularly in the Northern part of the country. inadequate infrastructure. Finally, the study made some recommendations which include: Proper and effective monitoring of the Basic Education Programme ,qualified teachers should be employed and the harmonization of teachers salaries be implemented immediately, more schools and classrooms should be built to accommodate pupils and students, there must be increased publicity, statistics must be properly kept and politics must be separated from education.

**Key words:** Historical, assessment, implementation, education

### INTRODUCTION

The world conference in Education for all in 1990 brought about a wider scope in education. Education being the instrument for social and economic development of a society, is very crucial as it is a tool for remoulding the potentials of human being for a more desirable behaviour. At the initial state, the conference brought about what is known as Basic Education and later the Universal, compulsory and free education known as Universal Basic Education (UBE). Perhaps basic education can be regarded as the type of education, in quality concept which is given in the first level of education. This level of education varies from one place to another. In some countries, it covers 8 years while in some other countries, it is 6 years.

Primary Education in Nigeria continued at a low pace until 1955 when the government of Western region introduced free primary education. In 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria also launched the universal primary education nationwide. The introduction of universal primary education in Nigeria increased the pupils enrolment, number of primary schools, teachers, government budget, teacher training colleges among others. Basic Education generally speaking, aims at laying

the foundation for lifelong learning via the inculcation of appropriate learning to learn, self awareness, citizens, as well as life skills.

The 1999 constitution clearly stated that the government will eradicate illiteracy in the country. In order to do this, the government will provide free, compulsory as well as universal primary education and free education up to the university level.

In order to solve problems facing primary education in Nigeria, decrees 31 of 1988, decree 3 of 1991 and decree 96 of 1993 were put in place by the Federal Government in order to solve most of the administration problems facing primary education in Nigeria. Basic Education is not only the foundation for further education but it equally helps the beneficiaries to be able to stand on their own in the nearest future.

According to the Master plan for Basic Education for all in Nigeria by the year 2000, in further pursuit of the goal of Universalizing access to education, Nigeria has now introduced a nine-year schooling programme for the children between the ages of 6 to 14. According to the document, the scheme which took off in September, 1992 expects all children who enter primary one in 1992 to remain in the school until the end of Junior Secondary Course.

In the same vein, the international conference, held in Geneva, 1994, national report from Nigeria declares as follows:

- The Federal Government is still committed to the establishment of a universal basic education programme for all Nigerians. The formal aspect of this programme involves nine-year schooling covering six years of primary education and the first three years of secondary education. This took effect from 1992.

The document also gave the following as the objectives of basic education in Nigeria:

- To ensure that all 6-years old children begin primary education.
- To ensure 100% transition rate from primary to junior secondary level.
- To contribute to a massive reduction in illiteracy by being free and compulsory and by increasing the number of years of schooling.
- To impart the rudiments of employment-creating skills at the JSS level where technical and vocational education is emphasized.
- To enhance the acquisition by children of life skills and thus contribute to their personal development.
- To serve as foundation for school learning and offer a second chance for children who have dropped out of the formal educational system as well as adults who never enjoyed the benefit.

In order to achieve the above stated objectives, the Nigerian government will do the following:

- Adequate facilities will be provided so as to ensure functional and qualitative education.
- The involvement of all sectors of the society in the smooth running of the programme will be assured.
- An efficient monitoring system will be set up to guarantee as far as possible, uniformity of practice.
- Effective and continuous, guidance and counseling services will be provided for students with regard to the transition from primary to junior secondary and also from junior secondary to the senior secondary level or to the world of work.

**Statement of the problem:** Over the years, education has not been given full recognition. Since after independence, it has been observed that the literacy rate is put at 52% and Nigeria is ranked fifth on the illiteracy ladder with its West African neighbours topping on the ladder of illiteracy table (Obanya, 2002). About 7.3 million children

do not go to school of whom 62% are girls and 62.67% are adult children of between 6-15 years who are out of school. This include drop-outs children who have never been to school (UNESCO, 2000).

Therefore the trust of this study is to assess the implementation of the Basic Education Policy between 1992-2002.

**Research questions:** What is the trend in enrolment in the primary schools in Nigeria 1992-2002.

- What is the trend in enrolment in the secondary schools in Nigeria, 1992-2002
- What is the trend in the number of primary school teachers nationwide, 1992-2002.
- What is the trend in the number of secondary school teachers nationwide, 1992-2002.
- What is the trend in the number of pupils completing primary six 1992-2002.
- What is the population of the school age children 6years to 17years in Nigeria?
- To what extent is the federal government committed to the funding of Basic Education in Nigeria?
- What are the major problems facing the full implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria? What is the way forward?

**Evolution of western education in Nigeria:** Many scholars have explored the development of western formal education in Nigeria. They included Fafunwa (1974) and Taiwo (1985). Fafunwa (1974) observed that western education commenced with the advent of the Christian missions such as the Wesleyan Methodist, the Church Missionary Society, the Baptist, the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Mission. The earliest arrival was the Wesleyan Methodist represented by Thomas Birch Freeman in 1942.

The primary assignment of the missionaries was to make conversion for the various missions which they represented but require education for the converts to enable them read the scriptures and propagate the gospel. In this connection, education was seen as a powerful instrument for the evangelization of the people of the Dark Continent. Education became therefore synonymous to evangelization. Schools were therefore opened to welcome children from the pagan communities. The aim was to convert and train them as teachers and catechist who would serve in the native minorities. Education therefore is seen as very important for human development. It can be concluded that through education, men acquire the civilization of the past and take part in the civilization of the present and because the

future is only partially and uncertainly predictable and because human facilities are inventive and resourceful, education for the future implies education for a future which is man's own (thinking and) making. Hence, all societies have instituted one form or another of educational system, which produce leadership in piloting and manning the present and future, which will bring about a better life for the people.

It was between 1870 and 1881 that the colonial government made small irregular grants to the missionaries in Nigeria and in 1882 the first educational ordinance was passed to provide grants-in-aid to the mission.

In 1908, another educational ordinance was passed which had a provision for the classification of schools in the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria.

According to Taiwo (1985) the classification is as follows:-

- Infants-Infants I-III and sub-standards I and II
- Primary-Standards I-VII, with most finishing in standard VI
- Secondary-Class I-V of which I-III corresponded, more or less to primary standards VI-VI
- Trade or technical
- Agriculture

Education development took a giant stand in the history of Nigeria in 1925 and 1940. The famous memorandum on Education Policy was first officially issued in 1925. The policy was an offshoot of Phelps Stokes mission to Africa in 1920-24. In 1940, the first colonial Development and Welfare Act was passed.

Before 1925 schools were built with reluctance and the British government who believed that only reason why there should be education in Africa was in order to sustain British Economic Policy through the Industrial revolution, consciously rationed education.

In 1925, after the visit of Phelps Stokes, it was realized that Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various people in Nigeria. According to Ikejiani, Nigerian Education plan showed evident of British concern in the quality of education in 1940. There was a ten year plan which emphasized on the following aspects of education.

- The type of education most suitable for the needs of the country.
- Better conditions of service for teachers employed by the missions and other voluntary bodies.
- More financial assistance to missions and other voluntary bodies.

- Financial assistance to native administrators in order to assist them to main an efficient staff of teachers and expand education in their areas.
- Controlled expansion within financial limits.

**Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nigeria:** In 1976, Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was the most significant developments in Nigerian education.

The objective of the Programme was for Education to be free, Universal and Compulsory throughout the country. (Fafunwa, 1974). The primary education would last for six years and primary schools would admit children aged 6 or who will be 6 before the end of the calendar year. The UPE programme was introduced in the three regions of the country, that is, Western, Eastern and Northern part of Nigeria, failed to make the desired impact.

Education scholars agreed that the UPE programmes in the western and eastern regions were improperly planned and therefore was faced with enormous problems like unavailability of infrastructure, lack of funds, shortage of teachers, etc. These problems brought about the collapse of the UPE programme in the 2 regions.

Although, there was increase in pupils' enrolment in the primary school, the quality of teaching was poor. On the quality of Western region scheme, Banjo commission 1960 observed that It was doubtful whether they (the pupils) have acquired permanent literacy in English language. Also, Taiwo commission reported a fall in standards. The Northern part of Nigeria was very much involved with her religious belief and therefore did not embrace the UPE scheme as much as the southern region. This is the major factor that brought about the current educational imbalance between the Northern region and Southern region. Although, the UPE had its problems but it popularized education in the different regions where it was practiced and could be regarded as limelight in popularizing education in Nigeria.

**Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria:** The collapse of the UPE brought about Universal Basic Education (UBE) which was launched in September 1999, by the President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

According to Taiwo (1985) and Ajayi (1994) the UPE was a great contribution to education in Africa and Nigeria in particular and due to the recognition of education as an important catalyst for nation development the collapse of the UPE thereby brought about the rise of UBE which is an improvement on the UPE programme.

UBE has a wider scope and a more embracing coverage than UPE because UBE is developed as a people-oriented programme with a consultative process. the scheme is free, universal and compulsory.

It has been observed that UBE would achieve or correct the irregularities, inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum of the UPE. He stated that there is increasing awareness of basic education which should be tailored to meet the needs of the learner and community in which he or she lives.

Also as no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers, three major areas crucial to the making of a good teacher is stated as follows: the initial teacher preparation, the induction of newly qualified teachers and the range of confirming education activities that can contribute to the professional development of teachers. The availability of teachers, insufficient number and with the relevant qualifications and motivation is one of the sore points that will help the UBE programme achieve its aims and objectives.

Okoro (2000) also postulated that UBE provides basic education to all deserving citizens, that is the reason why the Federal, State and Local Government see to the day-to-day running and management of schools recruit, remunerate and promote teachers and other personnel. Also laws and by-laws were made in respect to basic education in the States and Local Governments.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is historical in nature, hence, historical research method was adopted by the investigator. The researcher heavily relied on primary source of data information. Such primary documents are on Basic Education as well as Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. They also include the government policy in respect of Basic Education in Nigeria. In addition to the use of primary sources, relevant textbooks, journals, unpublished theses were also used.

Structured interviews were also conducted with Federal and State Ministry of Education officials in a few selected states to confirm the authenticity of the documents collected from the Federal Ministry of Education. It should also be stated here that ten higher degree students assisted in the collection of data from both the federal and the state ministries of Education.

Finally, the data gathered were analyzed based on the research questions raised earlier. Descriptive statistics which involve percentage as well as tables were also used to analyze the data.

### **RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the children age population in Nigeria particularly between 2000 to 2002. The table reveals that there are more children between 6-11 years than 15-17 years. By implication, the primary school age pupils are more than secondary school age students. This may be accountable for the number of primary schools in Nigeria being more than the number of secondary schools.

Again, it should be noted that the children aged 15-17 are supposed to be in the senior secondary schools, all things being equal. The implication of this is that it is not likely that the junior secondary school students are included in the ages 15-17. In most cases, the primary school age children are always greater in number than the secondary school age children.

Table 2 shows the number of pupils in the Nigerian primary schools and how many of them were able to complete primary 6 within the period of study. The table reveals that the number of successful candidates was not stable. At times, it increased and at times, it decreased. However, the table shows that more pupils were able to complete primary 6 within the period of study. The implication of the above is that the introduction of Basic Education in Nigeria has made it possible for many Nigerian pupils to have formal education at least up to primary 6.

Table 3 reveals that the introduction of Basic Education in Nigeria has brought about an increase in the number of primary school pupils and teachers. The Table 3 also shows that throughout the period of

Table 1: The children age population in Nigeria, 2000-2002 (6-11 years and 15-17 years)

Year	6-11 years	15-17 years
2000	20, 168, 288	7, 425, 036
2001	20, 907, 508	7, 677, 381
2002	21, 518, 126	7, 896, 509

Source: A handbook of information on basic education in Nigeria, Federal ministry of education, April, 2003

Table 2: Total primary school enrolment (National), 1992-2002

Year	No. of pupils	No. of pupils completing primary6
1992	14805937	1922914
1993	15870271	2128157
1994	16190947	2190712
1995	15741078	2131035
1996	14300242	1960084
1997	14917302	2042819
1998	16065567	2130691
1999	17907010	2391779
2000	19158439	2483670
2001	19385177	2385843
2002	19342659	2385178

Source: A handbook of information on basic education in Nigeria. Federal ministry of education in Abuja

Table 3: The pupils enrolment and number of primary school teachers in Nigeria, 1992-2002

Year	No of pupils	No of teachers	o/o of certified Teachers (N.C.E Grade I, Grade II)
1992	14, 805, 937	384212	80.8
1993	15, 870, 271	428097	78.2
1994	16, 190, 947	435210	78.8
1995	15, 741, 078	437619	79.8
1996	14, 300, 242	416747	80.4
1997	14, 917, 302	407140	81.0
1998	16, 065, 567	418715	82.7
1999	17, 907, 010	432096	81.2
2000	19, 158, 439	446403	79.5
2001	19, 385, 177	488164	78.2
2002	19, 342, 659	491751	78.3

Source: Federal Ministry of education, Abuja

Table 4: Total number of Primary School Teachers and Pupil/Teacher ratio in Nigeria, 1992-2000

Year	No of Teachers	o/o certified Teachers	Teacher/pupils ratio
1992	384212	80.8	39.0
1993	428097	78.2	37.0
1994	435210	78.8	37.0
1995	237619	79.8	36.0
1996	416747	80.4	34.0
1997	407140	81.0	36.1
1998	418715	82.7	38.3
1999	432096	81.2	35.8
2000	446403	79.5	42.9
2001	488164	78.2	39.8
2002	491751	78.3	39.3

Source: A handbook of information on basic education in Nigeria. Federal ministry of education April, 2003

study, about eighty percent of teachers in the Nigerian primary schools are qualified. This could be due to the effects of the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, through its Grade II and NCE distance learning programmes. However, as it is revealed in the table, there are still some Grade two teachers in the Nigerian primary schools as against the National Policy on education which makes the NCE the minimum teaching qualification.

Table 4 shows the total number of primary school teachers in the country within the period of study. It could be observed that the introduction of Basic education has brought about an increase in the number of primary school teachers. This trend continued throughout the period. The table also revealed that a good percentage of Nigerian primary school teachers are not only qualified but also professionally trained. However, the table reveals that more teachers are still needed for the Nigerian primary schools as a result of which the teacher/pupils ratio is still very high. This is against the National Policy on Education which stipulates that teacher/Pupils ratio will be one teacher to thirty five pupils.

Table 5 shows the total number of students and teachers in the Nigerian secondary schools between 1992-2002. It could be observed from the table that there were more students in the senior classes than junior classes.

Table 5: Total number of students and teachers in Nigerian secondary schools, 1992-2002

Year	No of JSS 1-3	No of SSS 1-3	No of Teachers
1992	868621	1353239	146, 531
1993	1015797	1614443	151, 722
1994	1069595	1603106	152, 596
1995	957625	1718060	N/A
1996	847937	1751966	N/A
1997	771649	1709567	144, 718
1998	769334	1767779	146, 696
1999	708523	1658611	129, 013
2000	806811	1827023	132, 884
2001	938903	2020937	140, 631
2002	941884	2154311	162, 960

N/A. Not Available, Source: Federal Ministry of education, Abuja

Table 6: Federal Government Expenditure on education, 1990-1998 (In millions of Naira at constant 1985 prices)

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Recurrent	669	440	453	424	442
Capital	113	154	120	133	406
Total	870	594	574	557	849
c/o of total federal Government expenditure	5.8	8.1	5.8	7.3	-

Source: A handbook of information on basic education in Nigeria. Federal ministry of education, April, 2003

This trend continued throughout the period of study. The Table 5 also revealed that the number of secondary school teachers nationwide was on the increase except 1999 and 2000 when the number was drastically decreased. This may not be unconnected with the fourth Republic in Nigeria as a result of which many teachers resigned or withdrew their appointment in order to join politics or participate in politics.

Table 6 shows the Federal government expenditure on education, 1990-1998. From the table, it could be seen that the percentage of government expenditure given to education is not very encouraging. Perhaps this may be one of the major reasons why the full implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria is not visible. The programme to be fully implemented needs more than what is being given to it. The implication of this is that if the government is actually serious about providing formal education for all Nigerians through Basic Educations, government should re-order its priorities by allocating the lion-share of the annual budget to education. Not only that, whatever money that is allocated to education must not be trapped anywhere. It must reach its destination and such money must be spent on nothing but education.

**Problems facing the full implementation of basic education in Nigeria:** The following are some of the problems facing the full implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria:

- Lack of publicity concerning the introduction of Basic Education in the country. It is not an exaggeration that much is still needed in the area of publicity. Many Nigerians are not even aware about the existence of Basic Education.
- Religion is another factor militating against the full implementation of Basic education in Nigeria. Many Moslems in the Northern part of the country believe that Islamic education is important than formal education. The use of sharia law may also affect the full implementation of Basic education. As a result of this, most girls in the Northern part of the country hardly attend schools.
- Finance is another problem facing Basic education. No matter how good a programme may be, without substantial amount of money, it may be difficult to achieve anything.
- Politics is another problem. In Nigeria as at 2006, there are about fifty political parties and each party has its own manifestos which may be different from others.
- Another problem facing Basic education is poor statistics. Education statistics are not being properly kept. Even where statistics are available, there may be different statistics on the same issue. The problem that always arises under this circumstance is which one of such different statistics will one believe or rely upon.
- Population census is another problem facing the full implementation of Basic education in Nigeria. Any nation that does not know the number of citizens or school age children or adults in her country will not be able to plan very well for her citizens in terms of provision of social amenities which include education. As at November, 2006 Nigeria cannot boast that this is the actual population of the country.
- There is problem of inadequate infrastructure for the Basic Education.
- Education supervision needs serious improvement.
- Teachers are not adequately motivated.
- Moslems should be properly educated about the importance of formal education. They must not see formal education as being against the sharia law.
- There is also the need for the government to increase its budget on education. This will go a long way in implementing Basic Education in the country.
- Also, government must separate the politics from education. They must not play politics with education. What cannot be implemented most not be included in the manifestos.
- Also, good and accurate statistics must always be provided on education. The statistics on education must be the same on the same issue. E.g. number of schools, teachers, pupils, students for the same state or local government or country must be one and the same throughout.
- The result of 2006 population census which was conducted early in the year must be released without further delay. From time to time, population census must be conducted and time must not be wasted in releasing its result.
- Teachers must be adequately motivated
- Adequate infrastructure must be provided for Basic Education.
- Education supervision must also be improved.

## CONCLUSION

This study assessed the implementation of Basic Education in Nigeria, 1992-2002. It was revealed in the study that while the implementation of the Programme has brought about an increase in the students enrolment, number of teachers and improvement in the quality of teachers, much is still needed to be done by the government to realize its full implementation.

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**The way forward:** In order to fully implement the Basic Education in Nigeria, the government should take the following steps:

- There is need for the government to create awareness for the Nigerian citizens. This will enable them to have information about the programme as well as its importance. In others words, the programme must be widely publicized.

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