

Teachers Perception of the Universal Basic Education Programme as an Educational Reform Policy

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Abstract: The study investigated the perception of secondary school teachers on the UBE programme as an educational reform policy. Relevant literatures were reviewed in the area of study specifically highlighting conceptual frame researchers and current issues. About 3 research questions and 2 hypotheses were developed for the study. The population of teachers selected for the study comprise of all secondary school teachers in Uvwie local government area of Delta. About 100 teachers were randomly selected through proportionate stratified random sampling from 5 secondary schools in the local government area. A questionnaire titled Perception of teachers on the UBE with face and content validity with a reliability of 0.71 was used to collect data for the study. While mean analysis was used for the reasearch questions the z-test was used to analyse the hypothesis. The results indicated that teachers have low perception of the UBE while there is no significant difference between male and female, rural and urban in the perception of teachers on the UBE as an educational reform policy. The conclusion was that teachers seem not be aware of the objectives and the goals of the UBE and also that teachers are adequately prepared to implement the program. This ultimately will affect the quality and success of the program.

Key words: Teachers' perception, universal basic education, secondary schools, local government area, female, male

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study: The National policy on education was developed to eradicate illiteracy at all levels of human existence and provide affordable education for all Nigerians irrespective of class, religion, ethnic origin or physical appearance. The policy was driven by a desire to eradicate poverty, increase indices of national development, increase political consciousness and encourage issues of national integration. These basic objectives of the National policy have not been realized. In pursuance of the aforementioned objectives of the National policy, the Federal government under the Federal Ministry of Education have from time to time introduced different educational reform programs with the hope of realising its objectives. One of such programs for educational reform is the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

Yoloye (2004) opined that the concept of basic education is not a relatively new concept to the Nigerian educational system. Within the last decade, it has assumed a global significance and its meanings has assumed a wider dimension. The expanded vision of UBE comprises the universalising of access and promotion of equity, focusing on learning and enhancing the environment of learning and strengthening partnerships. The UBE Act of 2004 represents a significant educational

reform which addressed the lapses and loop holes of the UPE. The UBE was formulated to be the bed rock of a life long learning that will impact reading, writing and the acquisition of the other relevant skills for sustenance and development. This education comprises of formal and non formal acquisition of basic skills. The objectives of the UBE include the following:

- Provision of free and compulsory education for the first 9 years or levels of education beginning from the primary to the junior secondary school
- Sanctions for parents who fail to send their children to school
- It is an inclusive education which embraces the formal and non formal settings of human development
- For the policy to succeed, there should be public enlightenment, social mobilisation, teacher recruitment and training, provision of infrastructural facilities, review of the then existing curriculum, adequate budgetary provision and basic education and skill acquisition programs

Since 2004, efforts have been made to implement the UBE program not without some difficulties and challenges. In recent times, the 2004 UBE Act has be reformed to emphasise basic 9 years compulsory

education for all. The junior secondary school has been merged with the primary school to make up the 9 years of compulsory continuous education. It is hoped that this will consolidate the objectives of the 9 years basic education.

The UBE mission statement according to Adepoju and Fabiyi observed that at the end of the 9 years of continuous education every child that passes through the system should acquire appropriate levels of literacy. Other skills include numeracy, communication, manipulation of life skills and be employable useful to himself and society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic values. The mission statement states in part-researchers in concert with all stakeholders by mobilizing the nation's energies to ensure that education for all becomes the responsibilities of all. The scope includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development, the 6 years primary education and the 3 years junior secondary school.

Conceptual frame work: Adepoju and Fabiyi adopted a system theory for analysing the researchers mechanism of the educational system. In their opinion, every organisation has an input and output process. The quality of the input determines the nature of the outcome. The system theory states that there are different parts in any organisation playing different functions. These different parts interact with each other and are independent on each other. They see the educational system as functioning according to the system theory. There are 3 basic processes in the system theory. These are the input, conversion and output. The input is what comes in from the outside, the conversion is the processes of internalisation while the output is the effect of the input and the conversion process on the system. The output is observable from the relationship between the system and the environment in which the system exists.

For the present study which is measuring perception of teachers of the UBE as an educational reform policy, the input will be the teacher's own experience of the UBE in the learning environment and other places where such teachers interact with other teachers on the implementation and workability of the UBE. The teacher's experiences are influenced by a number of factors. These factors include teacher's disposition towards their role as teachers and facilitators in the UBE, availability of infrastructural and instructional materials, qualification, prompt payment of salaries, level of community awareness and participation in the educational process, etc. These have the capacity of influencing and determining the nature of the input in within the system. The conversion is the interaction of the teachers with the UBE program.

The level of teacher's participation in and implementation of the objectives of the UBE will be determined by the level of input. The conversion process also involves the interaction of the teacher with the students who are suppose to be recipient and beneficiaries of the UBE.

The teacher's interaction with the UBE program and the teacher's interaction with the students in the learning situation will determine output. The output for the present study will be the effects or impact of the entire program of the UBE on the students and the society in general. The system in this study is the UBE. The teacher's perception of the UBE will be determined by all the components of the system which are the teacher's experience, the interaction with the objectives of the UBE and the interaction with the students and finally the impact of the UBE on the students and the general society.

Current issues in the implementation of the new UBE:

Lot of issues have continued to arise around the workability of the UBE Act considering the current political, social and economic climate in the country where well planned projects with good objectives do not see the light of day.

One of the issues is lack of proper supervision of schools with regard to the implementation of the UBE. Supervision of schools according to Edho (2010) has to do with quality control of educational policies and programmes. It is related to the efficiency of learning and the improvement of the teaching learning situation. It is a field of educational management. Obinaju sees educational supervision to be concerned with those activities which maintain and promote teaching and learning effectiveness in the school system. The aim is to ensure that the goal of education is realised within provisions of the national policy on education and in particular on the bases of the objectives of the UBE. Ezekwensili laments that there have been no supervision of schools for decades.

This lack of supervision has been observed to be one of the factors affecting the success of the UBE. An other problem is that of funding. Without money, no good venture will see the light of day. Just like other educational reform programmes in Nigeria, the UBE has also suffered from poor funding. This is highlighted in the research of Akpotu (2006) and Akinkugbe (1994).

Curriculum which is the content of what is taught is also one of the issues affecting the implementation of the UBE. According to Ajibola (2008), curriculum analysis on study shows that the learning experiences provided for the Nigerian child is rich and varied and has the capacity of meeting the immediate and future needs of the children. However, the curriculum of the Nigerian schools are over

ambitious and over loaded and are properly tuned to the needs of the labour market, particularly in pre-vocational and vocational technical courses. So, there is a gap between what is intended in the curriculum and what is actually learnt by the students. There is therefore, a failure in the teaching method which reveals poor training of teachers for the programme. This in the final analysis has had its own toll on the UBE.

The problem of population in the school system is yet another issue. Government has not addressed the problems of population in the school system. Free compulsory education brought many children into the school system without the schools being prepared to receive and cater for the needs of these children. The result was that many children came into school and left for many reasons. Such, reasons include no money for school fees and educational materials. Government could not sustain the free and compulsory education for children. The effect of the above is that many children of school age roaming the streets and hawking goods and being lured into crimes. They continued that many of those who managed to go into school were forced to withdraw prematurely either by their parents inability to pay their schools fees or by the uncongenial learning environment, characterised shortage of qualified teachers.

This situation is a major set back in the implementation of the UBE Act. Nother current issue is the shortage of qualified teaching staff to implement the new UBE. In the old UBE, the problem of shortage of teachers was very present. Thus, the attainment of qualitative and progressive education which the UBE emphasizes will largely depend on the quality of teachers and their devotion to duty. The number of teachers are still inadequate and many are discouraged with poor conditions of service.

Apart from the problem of inadequate qualified teachers there is also the problems of scarce teaching materials and lack of infrastructure. This problem has been there from UPF to the old UBE and now in the new reformed UBE program. It is a recurrent issue in every educational reform program. For instance there are books, no laboratories, no class rooms, no offices for the teachers, no places of recreation and exercise for the students, etc.

This explains the fact there was no sufficient planning for proper implementation of the various educational reform programs including the present one. It has also been identified that the experiences of the past are important for the present. The many issues and problems that made the previous educational reform policies to fail have not been addressed. The lofty goals and objectives of UPF and UBE were not realised because

of poor implementation. The new UBE may likely face the same problem if the problems of the past are not addressed at the present.

Research questions:

- What is the perception of teachers on the Universal basic education programme as an educational reform policy
- What is the perception of male and female teachers on the Universal basic education programme
- What is the perception of rural and urban teachers on the Universal basic education programme

Hypotheses:

- There is no significant difference between male and female teachers perception of the Universal basic education programme as an educational reform policy
- There is no significant difference between rural and urban teachers perception on the Universal Basic Education programme as an education reform policy

Methodology: The research methodology for the study was descriptive survey. The dependent variable in the study was perception while the independent variables were sex and location. The target population for the study consist of teachers in Uvwie local government area of Delta state. A sample of 100 teachers was randomly selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique from five secondary schools. A questionnaire titled Perception of teachers of the UBE which has face and construct validity and with a reliability of 0.71 was used to obtain information about teachers perception. While mean analysis of responses was used to analyse the research questions, the z-test was used to analyse the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: What is the perception of teachers on the Universal basic education programme as an educational reform policy. Table 1 shows that the calculated mean (\bar{x}) of 47-51 on teachers' perception is within the mean interval score of 0-49. The result implies that teachers perception on UBE is low.

Research question 2: What is the perception of male and female teachers on the Universal basic education programme. Table 2 showed that the mean of male perception is 38.12 while that of female is 47.15. These fall within the mean interval of 0-49. The implication, therefore is that both male and female teachers have low perception of the UBE programme.

Table 1: Mean analysis of teachers' perception on UBE programme

| Perception | N | Calculated mean (x) | Mean interval | Decision |
|------------|-----|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Teachers | 100 | 47.57 | 0-49 (Low) 50-100 (High) | Low perception for teachers |

Table 2: Mean analysis of male and female teachers perception on the UBE programme

| Sex | N | X | Mean interval | Decision |
|--------|----|-------|---------------|----------------|
| Male | 40 | 38.12 | 0-49 (Low) | Low perception |
| Female | 60 | 47.15 | 50-100 (High) | Low perception |

Table 3: Mean analysis of rural and urban teachers perception on the UBE programme

| Location | N | X | Mean interval | Decision |
|----------|----|-------|---------------|-----------------|
| Rural | 36 | 34.03 | 0-49 (Low) | Low perception |
| Urban | 64 | 60.10 | 50-100 (High) | High perception |

Research question 3: What is the perception of rural and urban teachers on the Universal basic education programme. Analysis of data in Table 3 shows that the mean of rural teachers is 34.05 while the mean of urban teachers is 60.10. While, rural fell within low perception range of 0-49, the urban fell within the high range of 50-100. The results revealed low perception for rural teachers and high perception of urban teachers.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers perception on the UBE as an education reform programme. Table 4 shows that the calculated $z = 0.43$ is less than the critical $z = 1.96$ at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore, accepted. The result maintains that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perception of UBE as an educational reform programme.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between rural and urban teachers perception of the UBE programme as an educational reform. Table 5 shows that the calculated $z = -11.54$ is more than the critical $z = 1.96$ at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. The result reveals that there was a significant difference between rural and urban teachers perception on UBE programme as an educational reform. The results generally indicated that there was a low perception of teachers on the UBE as an educational reform programme.

There was no significant difference between male and female teachers' perception of the UBE. However, there was a significant difference between rural and urban teachers perception on the UBE programme. It should be noted that the low perception of teachers may be as a result of lack of awareness and delay in implementation of the UBE. There was delay in its implementation in different states of Nigeria with Delta state inclusive. Again the UBE which is a 9 years programme appears to be confused with the 6-3 to 3-4 system of education. These systems of education are still operation side by

Table 4: The z-test analysis of male and female teachers' perception of UBE programme

| Sex | N | X | SD | Calculated z-value | Critical z-value | Decision |
|--------|----|-------|------|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Male | 40 | 38.10 | 10.1 | 0.43 | 1.96 | Accept |
| Female | 60 | 37.18 | 12.5 | | | |

Table 5: The z-test analysis of rural and urban teachers' perception of UBE programme

| Location | N | X | SD | Calculated z-value | Critical z-value | Decision |
|----------|----|-------|------|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Rural | 36 | 35.01 | 9.1 | -11.54 | 1.96 | Reject |
| Urban | 64 | 59.16 | 13.5 | | | |

side in Nigeria. The teachers are more familiar with the 6-3 to 3-4 system of education than the UBE. The results finally revealed that awareness of UBE appears to be coming from the urban areas where teachers perception is high. This agrees with the findings of Odili and Osadebe (2008) in a similar study.

CONCLUSION

The perception of teachers on the UBE has been investigated. It was found that there was low perception of teachers on the UBE programme as an education reform. Therefore, there should be a general awareness campaign on the UBE to teachers through seminars and workshops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study:

- There should be a general awareness campaign on the UBE to teachers. This could be achieved through seminars and workshops
- The UBE should be effectively implemented
- Enough teachers should be recruited for the 9 years basic education
- The facilities for the UBE should be provided the Ministry of Education

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