

EDUCATION FOR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR MICHAEL OMOLEWA

VOLUME II

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Education for Millennium Development:
Essays in Honour of Professor Michael Omolewa

Volume Two

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Published by
Spectrum Books Limited
Spectrum House
Ring Road
PMB 5612
Ibadan, Nigeria
e-mail: admin1@spectrumbooksonline.com

in association with
Safari Books (Export) Limited
1st Floor
17 Bond Street
St Helier
Jersey JE2 3NP
Channel Islands
United Kingdom

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First published, 2008

Editorial Manager: Olusola Adedokun
Senior Editor: Anthony Olumekor
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ISBN: 978-978-029-861-6

Printed by Polygraphics Ventures Limited, Ibadan .

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THE NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES OF FUND FOR THE SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION OF THE UBE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

The provision of the UBE programme is part of the wider context of Nigeria's overall developmental imperatives. In recognition of the immense benefits associated with the provision of the programme, the Nigerian government formally launched her Universal Basic Education in 1999 as one of the means to achieving those national objectives.

However, the sustainable provision of the UBE programme to all eligible Nigerians will require an increased expenditure (although resources need to be used more efficiently). This is premised on the fact that these expenditures cannot be met solely from public sources. Adverse intersection macroeconomic condition, which has increased competition for public funds, has resulted in curtailed government allocation to education despite its high social returns. For instance, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, which

was 1.13 percent in 1985, fell to 1.08 percent in 1990, and later to 0.61 and 1.02 percent in 1995 and 2000 respectively (Olaniyi and Adam, 2003:190). By every standard, this amount is a far cry from the recommended 26 percent by UNESCO. In addition, if the effect of negative price changes (inflation) is considered, then there is sufficient doubt in the ability of government to solely finance the UBE programme. This doubt in government's ability to provide all the needed finance for the successful execution of the UBE programme has generated some worries in certain quarters. According to Adeyemi and Iguneweka (2001), there is a growing fear that the cost of providing the UBE programme may be prohibitive such that its school programme like the previous experiment with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) may be jettisoned few years after take-off. This assertion, therefore, calls for a holistic involvement in the financing of the programme.

In consideration of the enormity of the needs and requirements for the successful implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria, it is, therefore, clear that government alone cannot singlehandedly shoulder the colossal financial burden of the programme. Available statistics shows that a whopping amount of three trillion, five hundred and four billion, seven hundred and forty-nine million five hundred and thirty-two thousand, four hundred and twenty naira (₦3,504,749,532,420) will be required for the successful execution of the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria for a period covering ten years from 2000 to 2010 (Obanya, 2002). On the average, a total amount of two hundred and ninety-two billion, six hundred and thirty-four million, six hundred and thirteen thousand, five hundred naira (₦292,634,613,500), will be needed annually to successfully execute the UBE programme in the country.

This amount covers the cost of providing blocks of classroom, renovation, school furniture, instructional materials, training, information communication and technology, libraries, staff recruitment, textbooks and teaching aids, management capacity-building and administrative cost.

Scope and Objectives of the UBE Programme

In 1990, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and (later) UNFPA launched the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand. Under the auspices of these partners and other development agencies, 155 nations and 150 NGOs came together and committed themselves to:

- expansion of early childhood care and development activities.
- universal access to, and completion of primary education by the year 2000.
- improvement in learning achievement.
- reduction in adult illiteracy to one-half its level by the year 2000.
- expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills.
- increased acquisition by individual and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development (World Bank, 2003).

As a signatory to the Jomtien (1990) declaration, and the E-9 New Delhi (1991) Declaration (nine countries with the highest number of illiterates and growing population in the world), (World Bank 1999 and Obanya, 2002), Nigeria formally responded by launching her own Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in September 1999 to provide free basic education for all children within the school-age bracket.

Unlike the UPE programme of the mid-1970s (which began precisely in 1976), and which was limited to only pupils at the primary level of education, the current UBE programme is more encompassing. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the scope of the UBE activities in Nigeria, covers programmes such as:

- Initiatives/programmes for the early childhood care and socialising;

- The acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and lifelong skill, especially for adult persons aged 15 and above;
- The out of school, non-formal education, the nomadic population, non-formal skills and apprenticeship training programme, and
- The formal school system from the beginning of the primary education to the end of the junior secondary school level.

Similarly, the objectives of the UBE programme include:

- The development in the entire citizenry,
- A strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion,
- The provision of free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school-age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- Catering for the learning needs of the young persons who, for one reason or the other had their schooling interrupted as well as ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills.
- Acquisition of ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The UBE programme is certainly all encompassing and laudable in view of its area of coverage and objectives. According to Obanya (2002), these objectives can be summarised into three major categories: namely, mobilising the entire society for full involvement in the promotion of education; meeting the educational needs of a wide variety of persons along a wide social spectrum, and laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Table 20.1 below ex-rays the Nigerian government responses to educational development in the country from 1992 to 2003. The

table shows the position occupied by the education sector in the country given the total budgetary outlay.

Table 20.1: Changing Pattern of Government Budgetary Allocation to Education in Nigeria (1995 – 2005) in (₦ billion)

| Year | Total Budget | Allocation to Education | % of Budget to Education |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1992 | 155,200,000,000 | 12,728,676,390 | 8.20 |
| 1996 | 188,221,068,083 | 12,135,951,790 | 6.45 |
| 1997 | 404,000,000,000 | 16,440,162,815 | 4.07 |
| 1998 | 260,000,000,000 | 26,721,320,906 | 10.28 |
| 1999 | 419,500,000,000 | 27,712,000,000 | 6.61 |
| 2000 | 667,511,714,733 | 56,688,169,766 | 8.36 |
| 2001 | 894,214,805,186 | 62,567,055,443 | 7.00 |
| 2002 | 1,064,801,253,520 | 73,435,499,300 | 6.89 |
| 2003 | 765,100,000,000 | 13,900,000,000 | 1.82 |

Source: Government annual budgetary releases for various years.
Compiled from Gani Fawehimi's *Research Team Publication*, 2003.

The analysis of government budgetary allocation to education over the years shows an unstable declining allocation during the period. The largest allocation was 10.28% during the General Sani Abacha-led military dictatorship. Even at that level, the amount was still a far cry from the UNESCO recommendation of 26% (Jaiyeoba and Atanda, 2004).

The oil dependent economy of Nigeria necessitates the need to urgently seek other means of support for the success of the UBE programme. It could be seen from Table 20. 1 above, that there is a sharp fall in allocation from 6.89 percent in 2002 to only 1.82 percent

in 2003. The fall in allocation is in response to the sharp decline in the total budget during the period. The implication is that complete reliance on budgetary estimates from government for educational development could be threatened. Consequently, the hope of achieving the UBE objective could be jeopardised.

Rationale for Comprehensive Funding Strategies for the UBE Programme

The traditionally predominant role of government in the financing and provision of basic education is usually rooted in political and social circumstances. Consequently, government took the responsibility of providing basic education freely, implying that the financial responsibilities are fully borne by it. However, these political and social circumstances are no longer consistent with most developing countries' (Nigeria inclusive) prevailing economic realities (World Bank, 2003:75). Other competing socio-economic necessities such as the provision of pipe-borne water, adequate electricity supply, adequate health care services, good road network and rail system etc., have mounted financial pressure on governments such that it may no longer be feasible for it to solely finance the UBE programme. Although, the successful achievement of the UBE objectives will have immense positive external effect on the overall well-being of society, (Okunameri, 2001; Obanya, 2002; Fabunmi, Akinwumiju, Uyana, 2002 and Fabunmi, 2004), the colossal fund needed to fully execute the programme surpasses the ability of government as earlier stated.

In spite of the limitation on the part of government's ability to solely shoulder the financial responsibility of the UBE programme, the need to increase Nigerian educational attainment at all levels and particularly at the basic level cannot be overemphasised. This is based on the fact that Nigeria educational attainment is still comparatively low even when compared with most other African countries. For instance, in a survey carried out among other African countries to ascertain the level of educational development, it was discovered that Nigeria falls short of other African countries such

as South Africa, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Garbon, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania where she was ranked 18th (Obanya, 2002). According to Umo (2003), even the African level of educational development pales into insignificance when compared with East-Asia and the Oceania with gross enrolment of 118%, 66% and 10.8% respectively for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as against 77%, 26% and 4% of the African countries with Nigeria ranking the poorest by African standard (Umo, 2003). In spite of all the agreement entered into by Nigeria concerning eradicating literacy, the literacy rate for Nigeria is still as low as 52% (Babalola, 2000). Therefore in order to achieve the laudable goals of the UBE programme, sufficient funds have to be generated and mobilised from all possible and relevant avenues. Much can rarely be achieved without adequate financial empowerment.

As stated earlier, the UBE programme is a gigantic national programme. In specific term, the programme will affect the life of all Nigerians, directly and indirectly. Table 20.2 shows the potential direct beneficiaries of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

Table 20.2: Potential Direct Beneficiaries of UBE

| | Group | Estimated Number | % of Nigeria's Total Population |
|----|--|-------------------------|--|
| 1. | Children aged 0 – 6 years | 15 million | 17% |
| 2. | Primary school children (including nomadic schools) | 24 million | 25% |
| 3. | Junior secondary school children | 5 million | 4% |
| 4. | Illiterate adults (48% of Nigeria's 80 million adults) | 39.6 million | 33% |
| 5. | Out of School youth | 15 million | 17% |
| | Total | 98.6 million | 80% |

Source: Adapted from Obanya, 2002: *Revitalising Education in Africa*.

Going through the table, it is significant to note that the estimated 131.8 million Nigeria's population (World Fact Book, 2006), 98.6 million or 74.8% of the population would become literate through the UBE programme. In view of the positive significant impact the UBE programme will have on Nigerians and the Nigeria socio-economic life, it is pertinent to explore every possible channel to fund the programme to its success.

Most importantly, as rationale for seeking alternative funding strategies for the success of the UBE programme, is the magnitude of the financial implication. For instance the minimum financial requirement for the successful take-off of the programme during the 2000/2001 academic year was put at ₦688.66 million covering the cost of classrooms, teachers salaries, teaching and learning materials, mass literacy and nomadic components, management capacity development and teacher professional development (Obanya, 2002). The UBE funding requirement is quite a gigantic challenge; hence all hands must be on deck to ensure its success.

Suggested Alternative Fund Sourcing Strategies

Owing to the huge amount of money needed for the implementation of the UBE programme, relying entirely on government sources will be inadequate. There is need for more innovative and pragmatic fund sourcing strategies to boost the financial status of the programmes. The steps required to source for money include among others.

One, the government at all levels will do well to create a UBE Fund Reserve to which a given proportion of their annual income can be paid. The fund can then be supervised by the various UBE commission in the different states who are answerable to the national body. It is important that the three-tiers of government show greater practical commitment to funding the programme. Moreover, the government (particularly at the national level), should ensure transparency and accountability with respect to the financial operation of the programme.

Two, the private sector should be sensitised and conscientised to get actively involved in the financing of the programme. The

need for sensitising and conscientising is based on the attitude of the private sector towards education in Nigeria. Most private organisations believe that investing in education does not provide immediate gain, hence, they are reluctant to contribute to educational development (Babalola, 1995). Efforts should be made for them to see the need as a matter of necessity to provide a genuine financial support for the programme. The private sector could deal directly with the individual schools within the communities. This in itself will help break the bureaucratic bottlenecks usually encountered in the process of operation.

Three, the entire community should be mobilised and sensitised to contribute to the successful implementation of the UBE programme. The support of the community could be by financial or non-financial means. For instance, the communities could provide physical labour, resources such as chairs and desks etc, for the local school. This will go a long way in reducing the financial burden on governments. However, it is important that the schools put in place a good working relationship with the community to ensure a good cooperation from the community (Jaiyeoba and Atanda, 2004).

Four, the school authorities, headmasters, classroom teachers and the parents teachers association should join hands with the local community in identifying the immediate and future needs with a view to jointly finding solution that will help in achieving the objectives of the programme.

Five, the role of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other voluntary agencies in the successful implementation of the programme cannot be overemphasised. According to Afolabi (2004), the need for active participation of voluntary agencies in the financing of our education programme are premised upon two factors: these are legal requirements and economic conditions. This is in consonance with the National Policy on Education (1998), which stipulates that government welcomes the participation of voluntary agencies in the funding of education. On the economic justification for voluntary agency to participate, it is emphasised that the human capital formation built by the education sector is a

reservoir from which the different organisations draw their skilled labour force needed for the work in the respective organisations. Hence, the need for voluntary agencies and non-governmental organisations to be involved in the financing of the Universal Basic Education programme. This could be done through direct provision of infrastructural materials and equipment to schools (Adeboyeje and Afolabi, 1991).

Six, the international organisations should be made to understand the country's limitations in terms of the financing of basic education in Nigeria. Since the Jomiten 1990 World Conference on Education for All was an international one, the international agencies such as the World Bank and other development agencies should help in providing relevant financial support for the successful implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria. Such organisations as UNDP, which has been involved in development programme, should be persuaded to expand their activities to the development of mass literacy programme for all eligible Nigerians through absolute financial and non-financial support for the UBE programme.

It will not be out of place to make a clarion call to all the well-to-do Nigerians in the diaspora to provide the needed financial and material support to ensure the success of the Universal Basic Education programme in the country.

Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education programme is a national programme with potential for improving the entire socio-economic status of Nigeria if fully implemented. However, the successful implementation of the programme, to a large extent, is dependent on the ability of the country to mobilise the needed quantum of the financial requirements. It is therefore, necessary for all hands to be on deck in order to be able to achieve the goals and objectives of the programme. National and international effort should be made to ensure its successful implementation. A joint effort of all and sundry will go a long way in making the country achieve its mass literacy goal.

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