INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AT THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) LEVEL: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

Inclusive curricula and entrepreneurial skills at the Universal Basic Education (UBE) level play a vital role in accelerating the pace of development. This paper examines the concept of inclusive curricula, entrepreneurial skills and national development. It also highlights the goals and benefits of inclusive curricula/entrepreneurial skills at this level. It discusses the impediments to achievement of inclusive curricula and entrepreneurial skills such as lack of qualified teachers, absence of entrepreneurial workshops, societal and cultural influences among others. It explains the implications of over populated/ crowded enrollment in the UBE level and suggests the way forward for improvement. The paper recommends that government

should provide adequate funding for the smooth running of the UBE program, by providing basis infrastructures, relevant materials and incentives to teachers who are the main implementers of the school curricula. This will facilitate national development in Nigeria and the world at large.

Keywords: Inclusive Curriculum, Entrepreneurial Skills, and Universal Basic Education.

Introduction

Nigeria gained its independence from British rule in 1960, but it took time to develop its own educational system. "Prior to 1977 Nigeria operated an educational policy inherited from Britain at independence. The inability of this policy to satisfy the national aspirations of the country rendered it unpopular." During the 1970s, the foundations were laid for a new policy, and in 1976 the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was launched, but it was widely considered to be unsuccessful. "A National Seminar was organized by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1973... This gave rise to the National Policy on Education in 1977." The policy was then revised in 1981 and 1990 to try to ensure that the education sector was supportive of government development goals.

School enrolment was still low at the beginning of 1990s – as of 1990, gross enrolment ratio in primary school was at 86%, but it had dropped to a mere 25% by the time children reached secondary school.

Table 1: Summary of primary school statistics 1984-1994

YEAR	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	TOTAL ENROLMENT	TEACHING STAFF	TEACHER PUPIL RATIO
1984	38,211	4,383,487	359,801	1:40
1985	35,281	13,025287	308,072	1:42
1986	35,433	12,914,870	292,921	1:44
1987	34,266	11,540,179	309,032	1:44
1988	33,796	12,690,798	308,178	1:41
1989	34,904	12,721,087	344,221	1:37
1990	35,433	13,607,249	331,915	1:36
1991	35,446	13,776,854	353,600	1:37
1992	36,610	14,805,937	384,212	1:39
1993	38,234	15,870,280	428,097	1:27
1994	38,649	16,190,947	453,210	1:37

Source: **Adapted from the Federal Ministry of Education** Lagos

The education sector infrastructure also deteriorated and was neglected. In 1997, the minister of education – while on a nationwide tour of the country's schools – allegedly stated that "the basic infrastructure in schools such as classrooms, laboratories, workshops, sporting facilities, equipment, libraries were in a state of total decay. The physical condition of most schools was reported to be pathetic."

Table 2: Growth of Recurrent & Capital Budget Estimate on Infrastructure in Nigeria between 1997-2014 (%)

Year	1977-1986	1987-1996	1997-2006	2007-2014
Transport and Communication	-1.84	49.2	79.6	7.03
Education	8.78	48.4	33.1	13.3
Health	11.1	38.9	44.1	13.3
Construction	18.8	27.0	57.4	4.96
Water	38.0	33.3	73.2	4.96

Source: Computed from the various issues of the CBN statistical Bulletin and Financial and Economic Report 2014.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was launched in 1999, with the goal of providing "free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years". The programme, however, was not able to take off immediately after its launch as it did not have legal backing. Therefore, initial UBE-related activities were carried out only in areas of social mobilization, infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials, etc. The UBE programme only took off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004.

Definition of Concepts

Universal basic education: The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme is a nine (9) year basic educational programme, which was launched and executed by the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness.

Entrepreneurship: The capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit. The most obvious example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses. Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled. ... Merriam-Webster gives a definition that is closer to what most of us would probably offer the English learner: an entrepreneur is "a person who starts a business and is willing to risk loss in order to make money." Commonly, entrepreneurship is defined as the process of creation and development of a specific business or group of businesses with the purpose of generating profit from it. This is how this notion is defined in basic terms. However, there are some broader definitions – such as the transformation of the world for the better cause, initiating changes in society, creating the modern production, presenting the solutions to relevant issues and solving significant problems.

Curriculum: The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. In dictionaries, curriculum is often defined as the courses

offered by a school, but it is rarely used in such a general sense in schools. Simply put, Curriculum is the outline of concepts to be taught to students to help them meet the content standards. Curriculum is what is taught in a given course or subject. Curriculum refers to an interactive system of instruction and learning with specific goals, contents, strategies, measurement, and resources.

National development: Refers to the ability of the nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Some of the measures are increase in gross domestic product, improving literacy rates, improving medical facilities, etc. The term 'National Development' is very broad and comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the development of a nation namely, political, social, economic etc. So, it is a dynamic and revolutionary development of the society. Moreover, it is both qualitative and quantitative. According to Vaizey (2012), National development is the total effect of all citizens, forces and addition to stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skill". According to UN Decade report (2010), National development is growth plus change in turn in social, cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative. National development is the change in growth and development, which includes social, cultural and economic change. It is the ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people. It would be the expansion and growth of people in a defined territory or government.

The nature and scope of UBE curriculum in Nigeria

Nigeria has implemented several initiatives since the 1970s to improve their education sector, but they have had important challenges to their implementation, which have compromised the resources and infrastructure required to achieve these programmes' goal. The key elements and resources for the implementation of the UBE initiative were established in the UBE Act and the National Policy on Education (revised 2004). Some of the policy initiatives from this law include:

- It requires every government in Nigeria to provide compulsory, free, UBE for every child in primary or junior secondary school.
- It establishes that all services in public primary and junior secondary schools are to be free of charge – and penalties are prescribed for those who do not comply.
- Parents have a duty to enroll their children, and make sure they complete the basic education cycle – with penalties for noncompliance.
- A provision is made to finance the UBE from – a federal government grant of not less than 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund, funds or contributions in form of federal guaranteed credits, and local and international donor grants.

Fabunmi (2004) intimated that the programme was conceived as a response to the level of awareness and general education of the populace. The UBE scheme was introduced in order to take care of the large population of the disadvantaged groups, the rural community, the girl child, the nomadic, the disabled, the alma Jiri and the phenomenon of boys drop-out. The welfare of the teachers is another paramount importance, because it is from them that the

standard and enhanced learning achievement can be restored. UBE was introduced so that teacher's involvement in curriculum development, in societal mobilization and in the overall educational decision-making process will be improved. The programme was also packaged to make school environment learner friendly by providing appropriate forms of infrastructure and facilities and recognizing the professional autonomy of teachers and school administrators.
With the introduction of Universal Basic Education, it is believed that development of Nigeria will be accelerated because of inherent value in education. Attesting to this, Preece (2006) submitted that education is a proven contributor to reducing poverty. As the UNESCO IIEP (2002:25) document states:

> *"Education has been shown to have an impact on individual workforce outcomes such as a higher income, but the impact is greater than that literacy and formal schooling are linked with reduced fertility rates, improved health and sanitation practices and an increased ability to access information and participate in various social and economic processes. Educated parents also tend to invest more in children schooling, health/nutrition, and human capital measures important for future well-being*".

The evidence indicates that basic education affects not only wages but also broader workforce outcome, such as participation in the formal labour market, work in more modern sectors, and (particularly for women) the ability to earn regular income from work (Spohr, 2002).

The main objectives of UBE curriculum in Nigeria education system

Education, needless to say, is a priority sector in every well-meaning society. Thus, Burtch (2006) referred to it as a major force in economic, intellectual, social and cultural empowerment. Its value in bringing about character and attitudinal change ranks as important as its ability to reshape human potentials for desired development. The education given by the colonial masters was tailored towards white-collar job and this did not contribute meaningfully to Nigerian educational business venture according to the critics of the system. Hence, the idea of introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the regional government of Western Nigeria in 1955. This too failed woefully. The specific objectives of the UBE scheme as stated by the Federal Ministry of Education (1999) are:

a) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
b) The provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.
c) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through relevance, quality, and efficiency).
d) Catering for the learning needs of young people who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education, and

e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.
f) Ensuring uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education by providing FREE, and COMPULSORY basic education for every child of school-going age under.
g) Six years of Primary Education Three years of Junior Secondary Education Providing Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE)

(viii)Reducing school drop-out and improving relevance, quality and efficiency; and
(ix) Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living.

Basic Features of the UBE Programme

- Free Formal Basic Education
- Compulsory, Uninterrupted Nine years of Primary and Junior Secondary School education.
- Emphasis on Curriculum diversification and relevance to cover effectively and adequately individual and community needs and aspirations.
- Disarticulation of Junior Secondary Schools from Senior Secondary Schools.
- Introduction of rudiments of computer literacy.
- Appropriate continuous teacher professional development.
- Community ownership of schools including participation in decision-making process in schools.

Key Issues in the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004

1. The Federal Government's intervention shall aid the States and Local Governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform and qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria.
2. Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age.
3. Every parent shall ensure that his/her child or ward attends and completes (a) primary school education; and (b) junior secondary school education.
4. The stakeholders in education in a Local Government Area shall ensure that every parent or person who has the care and custody of a child performs the duty imposed on him/her under the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004.
5. Transition from Primary to Junior Secondary School (JSS) should be automatic as basic education terminates at the Junior Secondary School level thus entrance examination may no longer be necessary. Emphasis will be placed on effective continuous assessment, while final examination and certification will now be done at the end of the nine-year basic education programme.
6. The Secondary School system should be restructured so as to ensure that the JSS component is disarticulated from the SSS as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE).

Inclusive curriculum for entrepreneurial skills: The implication for national development

Nigeria has introduced a new senior secondary education model that emphasizes the skills as well as the academic development of learners. The skills component of the model is being pursued through the teaching and learning of 34 vocational (trade-based) subjects developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Nigeria's agency for curriculum development. The trade subjects, which are taught together with the academic oriented school subjects, allow students to acquire specific vocational skills in at least one trade area, based on students' choice. A fundamental gap was observed after five years of implementing the new education model. It revealed that, while students had learned the trades, they lacked the entrepreneurial skills and ingenuity to deploy the acquired skills for profitable economic ventures.

In 2017, the 34 trade curricula were reformed and a new trade and entrepreneurship curriculum was introduced to provide students with practical opportunities to acquire entrepreneurial competences alongside their trade-specific skills, by taking part in in-school small-scale businesses ventures, to prepare them better for the world of work. NERDC piloted the revised curriculum before attempting full-scale introduction across the nation. The very helpful piloting stage provided the opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum before full-scale nationwide implementation. In the course of piloting, NERDC was able to scale up interaction with teachers and school managers, thereby improving mentoring and school support services. NERDC has also gained a better insight into the serious drawbacks that hinder effective curriculum implementation across Nigeria's complex school system.

NERDC is currently taking a critical look at the entire school curricula with the intention of making them much more responsive to the critical needs of the country. It has developed new contents, including financial literacy education, capital market studies, trafficking in person education, and online safety education, that are now being infused into existing school curricula. These new contents aim to support Nigeria's drive for entrepreneurship and human capital development in a digitally inclined society. Additionally, NERDC is developing an 'education in emergency curriculum' for the formal education sector to serve the needs of thousands of internally displaced school age children affected by insurgency and other forms of crises. This curriculum is designed to enable children to cope mentally and emotionally, and above all, prepare them for reintegration into the formal school system.

It is a general belief that education plays a vital means in achieving development in all ramifications. In many countries, education has provided one dependable leverage for national development. In this regard, education and training have continued to be given a very high priority in countries' National Development Plans to educate and prepare enough people to fill middle and high-level positions in the private and public sectors of the economy. This is because, the production of sufficient numbers of secondary and university graduates with the

required skills, knowledge and expertise for filling the middle and high-level positions to prop the modern dynamic economy remains a challenge to educational planners (Tostensen and Scott, 1987). It should be noted that primary education serves as foundation to the other two levels of education (i.e, secondary and tertiary).

Raji (2004) described education as both a social and private good. It is an investment that is capable of yielding benefits that have some externalities. Education and training are the main instruments available to government and the community to prepare individuals for a rapidly changing, increasingly demanding world of work, and to improve their employability. This is why scholars of economics of education and educational planning continue to link investments in education to national development. Perhaps, it was this belief that led to the global declaration of Education for All (EFA) in 1990 in Jomtien Thailand (Fabunmi, 2004). This culminated the Nigeria emphasis in provision of basic education for all and which has to be compulsory. Basic Education is the foundation for sustainable lifelong learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills (FME 1999). Basic education refers to early childhood and pre-primary education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education and basic functional literacy for out-of-school children, youths and adults. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy.

Impediments to the attainment of inclusive UBE and entrepreneurial skills curriculum in Nigeria

In this regard, funding availability for the programme has not actually been a limitation but rather its allocation and accessibility. “It is on record that between 2000 and 2008, the sum of NGN22.6 billion that had been allocated to some public tertiary institutions, state Ministries of Education and Universal Basic Education Boards by the Education Trust Fund was not accessed during the period." Similarly, human capacity for UBE delivery has been a constraint on programme delivery. A UNESCO report states that the government committed to have the human resource base necessary to manage and implement the UBE Scheme by 2015. The implementation of the UBE programme is overseen by the UBE Commission (UBEC), with a range of other institutions specifically responsible for education in the country. However, there is no clarity on the management structures and guidelines for the programme’s delivery.

The under-utilization of funds has also become a major challenge in the implementation of the UBE programme. Several reasons relate to the lack of alignment:

- Insufficient consultation with the states in the design and implementation of the UBE programme.
- Inadequate policy coordination across three tiers of government in the implementation.
- Lack of capacity within states to use funds in accordance with the guidelines;
- Complex conditions for accessing the funds and the associated bureaucracy;
- Lack of capacity and political will at the federal level to amend guidelines in light of experience and to drive through disbursements, etc

Moreover, the economic difficulties of the country aggravate the situation at the household level, where the levels of poverty make it difficult for parents and families to support children's education. "The UBE programme was not actually performing on its mandate because of the harsh economic realities of parents, which have forced many school age children out of school in search of means of livelihood through hawking or other menial jobs." Other impediments to the attainment of inclusive UBE and entrepreneurial skills curriculum in Nigeria include;
Shortage of Teachers

It is a well-known fact that no educational system in a nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. In other words, the success of the system rests on the availability of good and qualified teachers who are internally motivated. Wasagu, (2006) stated that "Teachers are the way to improvement since they are the final brokers when it comes to educational policy". Former minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyatu Rufai (2010) stated that "lack of qualified teachers was responsible for the dismal performance of students especially in mathematics and English language". That poor performance turned out to be a child's play when NECO released its own SSCE results which showed that only 126,500 of the 1,260,765 candidates, just 10 percent of those who registered for the body's exams passed five subjects including English and mathematics. The statistics also showed that only about 234,682 out of the 1,260,765 candidates who sat for the exams made five credits in five core subjects the minimum requirements for the university admission in Nigeria. That means only two percent passed the exams with five credits including English and mathematics. Therefore, where there are competent, capable and well-motivated personnel among other things, the educational system of a country can surely succeed.

Over Crowding

The introduction of UPE brought with a sudden population explosion in schools and its resultant effects on teacher-pupil or student ratio. Overcrowding in the classroom is now the order of the day from Primary to University level. Because of the overcrowded classrooms, there are usually not enough places for the number of students in class/lecture rooms. This type of atmosphere is not conducive for effective teaching/learning process. Effective teacher/student relationship may not be possible in an overcrowded classroom. This probably explains why teachers in higher institutions of learning resort to the use of handouts (Akande, 2004:63).

Inadequate Infrastructure

This refers to the physical and spatial enablers of teaching/ learning. They include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, play fields, school farms and gardens as well as provision of water and sanitation. These have to be of the appropriate quantity, size and quality to meet the minimum standards for promoting any meaningful teaching and learning condition.

Funding of Education

The managers of primary secondary and higher institutions in Nigeria are in consensus that these institutions are grossly underfunded. This menace could be seen in the degree of dilapidation that characterizes the primary and secondary buildings in parts of the country. The non-payment of teachers' salaries and allowances which most times result in strikes. There is lack of necessary teaching and learning material at all levels of the educational system. Finally, the mismanagement and diverting of substantial resources from the educational system to other ends. The underfunding has been criticized and attributed to several factors ranging from military rule, diversion and mismanagement of funds and lack of focus (Victor, 2002, Dike 1999, Bolag 2002).

Wider accessibility issues

Many children walk long distances to attend school, and a combination of a lack of adequate transportation, difficult terrain, poor quality roads and the associated cost to families make many schools inaccessible to girls and boys with disabilities. Girls in particular may be at more risk of exclusion if their parents keep them at home because of fears for their safety and security when travelling to and from school. Mothers or fathers, or older sisters or brothers, may carry smaller children but this can eventually become too difficult. Building ramps and creating physically accessible schools is important, but so too is creating sustainable community transport solutions between home and school.

Lack of access to toilets in school can also be a major barrier for children with disabilities. If a child cannot use the toilet all day while at school, he or she is much less likely to attend. Even if toilets have been adapted to make them accessible, they must be maintained. In cases where schools do not have adapted toilets, they may use this as an excuse to keep boys and girls with disabilities out of the school, saying that there are no staff helpers who can take children to the washroom.

Ignorance of community health personnel by the children

The lack of educational psychologists or even the regular use of simple assessment tools means that many teachers are unaware of the potential or needs of the young people in their classrooms. This gap also makes it hard to understand what progress a programme might or should achieve, and how to measure whether the education service provides quality and having the best possible impact.

This can be a particularly difficult issue for children with multiple disabilities and sensory impairments. Prevailing attitudes in some places are that these children belong in special schools or are not capable of learning. This may result from a lack of understanding of the ethos of inclusive education; for example, some people advocate home-based education or the use of resource teachers who visit the mainstream school once a month only to track if the child attends school. While there may be a role for home education and resource teachers for some

children within our projects, our focus will always be on changing school cultures towards inclusion. Used by themselves, such approaches do not lead to inclusion or fundamental changes of education systems or societies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered, for better implementation and to make the UBE programme more effective: Since Nigeria is now getting rooted in democratic system of government, the next people in government are strictly advised not to change or stop the implementation of UBE because it has been found to be far better and more promising than the previous programmes. However, monitoring of the implementation strategies need to be put in place to ensure maximum result. Chairs, tables, classrooms provided for this programme in the states and other parts of the country are almost enough, except in some rural areas. There is a need for the government to provide more in terms of library facilities, laboratory facilities and play materials. In fact, from schools visited during the study it seems play materials are inexistent in the primary schools and knowing fully that the best method of teaching the pupils at this level is through play most especially the pre-primary level. Adequate provision should therefore be made for play materials, library facilities and laboratory facilities in order to give the pupils chances to explore their environment through their interaction with such materials.

It is also very important that a better monitoring strategy be designed for the fund released to the programme so as to ensure proper usage of such funds. It should be noted that a well-planned programme, that is well funded might be rendered ineffective through embezzlement and corruption. If all these are ensured, then, UBE programme still have more in stock to give to Nigerians in terms of national development as found in some other countries such as United States, Tanzania and so on. Amongst the findings of the study are the remarkable departure of UBE from the failed UPE, provision of infrastructures though not adequate (e.g. libraries and laboratories), release of adequate fund but with no transparency in the disbursement, adequate provision of necessary manpower for the successful implementation of the programme and finally, enhanced social, economic and political development in the nation due to the introduction of UBE. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that, Nigerian government should be more conscious of the monitoring of UBE implementation and thus pay more attention to this area so as to ensure maximum result. More furniture should also be provided to schools in the interior parts of the country.

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