

# MODERNIZATION OF BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME BEING IMPLEMENTED IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

*This paper titled: Modernization of basic education programme being implemented in Nigerian schools for development surveyed the problems/challenges which led to the failure of UPE (Universal Primary Education Programme in Nigeria and the challenges facing the present day Universal Basic Education programme. The data/information collected from some stakeholders showed that apart from poor funding, planning, implementation and structuring, there are some traditional and other institution values, operational techniques and objectives which should be radically changed to be more dynamic and vibrant. It was then recommended that Basic Education as the foundational education programme should be modernized by at least giving pupils more hours to being exposed to creative, innovative and productive works and lesser hours to the acquisition of knowledge.*

## **Introduction**

Efforts to adopt Universal Basic Education and ensure the successful implementation of its programmes and policies in the country must have commenced as far back as the 1950's. This was when some regional governments particularly in the South- West geo-political zone embarked on the provision of Universal Primary Education (UPE) for the pupils. The UPE was eventually made popular in 1976 after it was launched but after some years, programme failed. This was due to several reasons which Uyoata (2016) attributed to include poor planning, structuring and funding.

By the year 1992 the Federal government proceeded to adopt another programme titled the National Programme of Action on the Survival, protection and Development of the Nigerian Child. The programme was simply aimed at seeing that all pupils achieve 100% enrollment and completion of their primary education in schools. Unfortunately, this was not fully achieved due to poor planning, structuring, implementation and funding (Unamma, 2017).

By the year 1999, Universal Basic Education was flagged off in response to achieving the goals of Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This education programme was to be free and compulsory for children of school age. It is to lay the foundational structure for life-long skills through inculcating in the primary school pupils the appropriate functional learning, self-awareness and other strategies to attain the EFA and MDGs. It was quite unfortunate that this UBE programme, according to Obanya (2016), recorded only some degree of success in the area of the pupils having physical access to the primary education. It explains why he stated that there was rising enrolments of male and female pupils between 2007 and 2012 up to 47% or thereabout. He further observed that beyond counting mere enrolment figures, 32 states of the Federation, with the exception of Lagos, Bornu, Yobe, Abia and Rivers States, with the assistance of Development Partners (DPS) were able to develop what was described as education sector strategic plans. He acknowledged the full participation and guide by the Federal Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Planning, Research and statistics in grouping the states into four sets in developing the plans. For instance, in the workshop, the groups were categorized as indicated below:

- Group one comprised of Kaduna, Kano and Kwara States.
- Group two comprised of Bauchi, Jigawa and Niger States.
- Group three comprised of Sokoto, Kebi, Zamfara, Katsina, FCT, Enugu, Iino, Ebonyi, Oyo, Osun, Orido, Ekiti, Kogi, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Anambra and Bayelsa States and
- Group four comprised of Adamawa, Gombe, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Edo, Delta and Ogun States.

The above states, at the end of the workshop, came out with good and workable strategic plans for the education sector and particularly the UBE programmes or other programmes. Unfortunately, the five states which were left out during the workshop could be regarded as a minus in the achievement of the states that participated. Obanya (2016) stated that the reason for leaving some states out of the workshop/project may not escape from being bad politics, budgetary gymnastics, poor data behaviour, policy Jigsaw or somersaulting, poor governance, corruption, ineffective structures and rigid traditional institutions. He further attributed the lapses to demography surge and manipulation, poor level of civil engagement, making of local government education authorities redundant and funding crisis in the midst

of economic recession or parties conflict of interest. Obanya (2016) further observed that there has been very little evidence of the synergic working relationship among some institutions and structures whose programmes are clashing with the UBE programmes. And as such there has been a worrisome conflict at the state level of the interest of Nomadic Education Commission, National Commission for Literacy and Non-Formal Education and Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, over the UBE programmes, among others.

Moreover, we are in the environment today where some parents and groups of individuals do not see the need for all pupils or some sex to acquire the basic education either in the Islamic or Western and even both patterns. It calls for a secured learning environment for all pupils. The unsafe physical features of most places where the pupils learn hinders and makes it difficult for all children to benefit from the UBE programmes. Paucity of qualified, committed teachers and motivational classroom assessment has made UBEC (Universal Basic Education Commission) to spend much money every year to subject the; head teachers and teachers to some training workshops. This is a welcome development yet many of our children seen to be frightened and scared away from the UBE programmes being implemented in schools.

IMSUBED (2018) states that just as a learner is changing, so the teacher should be trained to adapt his or her roles and regulations to suit the learner else it will affect the learners. It was in the bid to take care of the above problems that the target year for the realization of the UBE programme goals, EFA goals and MDGs was again shifted from 2015 to 2030. According to Obanya (2016), out of the seven goals drawn and 4 targets outlined in the goals one of them which is target 2 states that it is required that by the year 2030, all girls and boys through the UBE programme should have completed free and compulsory quality basic education of at least nine years and achieve relevant and functional learning outcome with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

It is on this note that this paper recognizes that the UBE academic programmes which has been divided into major core subjects and minor/elective subjects should not be continuously seen as the final structure. This structure has long been implemented, but the debate and criticisms has continued, up till this present time, on the usefulness of the present UBE programmes structure to national development in terms of achieving the aims, goals, objectives and functions of education in this 21st century. This paper in its focus has

recognized the need to adopt modernization in driving for change in the academic structure of the UBE programmes being implemented in schools (Primary and Secondary) as at present. There is the foremost need for modernization of UBE programmes based on the current social, economic and school environment.

There are a number of assumptions/rationale behind this call for Basic Education programmes restructuring. In the first place, the academic restructuring and rationalization of its subjects based on modernization factors will make the UBE programmes to positively impact upon society as a whole, and needs of all present and future stakeholders. The restructuring process in the UBE academic programmes is critical to more efficient and equitable formula to receiving subventions or financial support from government and other donor agencies. According to UBE (2013), it is the right step towards having a more vibrant set of UBE programmes, stronger strategic plan for research (whether it is basic or applied research and lifelong outreach programmes of which many who before now have not benefitted will start benefitting in the communities/street/forest for national development. UBEC (2013) opines that it will make the UBE programme outstanding when compared to the educational programmes of other competing institutions.

In the course of collecting data for this paper from 3150 respondents, the researcher sampled the opinions of 758 UBE staff in Imo State, head teachers, teachers undergoing various trainings and retrainings pupils, resource persons and even personal observations. The data collected using a self made modernization scale was critically analyzed.

The study was anchored on the dualism, appropriate technology, value, roles, political development and indigenous culture revival modernization theories by Boeke, Greetz, Scott, Berger and Nandy respectively. On analyzing the data collected as indicated in the table in an appendix which is not presented here, it was agreed by majority of respondents whose mean scores were above 2.50 that modernization through restructured quality UBE programme will partly replace the belief of most Nigerian's in supernatural force or divine fate with belief in rational force and scientific human capabilities. Modernization is a strategy which if adopted in the UBE education programme will among others factors widen state services, capacities, regulations and mobilization of the masses for approval to full participation in all national ideology of equality, freedom and political/social activities that will bring about peaceful co-existence. It will encourage the development of new forms of creative expression, skills and expertise among all Nigerians.

### **Modernization of the UBE Programme in Nigeria and its Benefits**

Modernization is the pace and process of change through the increasing application of science and technology, and which has made the traditional thinking of a society and old landmarks to be radically replaced by new norms, methods, aspirations, ideologies, nuances be it political, social, economic and cultural that has resulted into what is known as process of modernization. It explains why Taneja (2010) defines modernization as a process movement from traditional and quasi-traditional order to certain desired types of technology, ideologies, and the resultant changes in the social structure, value, orientations, motivations, achievement and aspirations. According to Rathee & Sheetal (2018) further says it means a value change, significant institution modifications, and improvement of standards, structures of performance and achievement. Rathee & Sheetal (2018), it is not a mechanical imitation of some modernized countries, which is termed westernization today, rather it is known as the discriminate selection between what is worthy and what is not worthy or suitable in a particular situation.

Further still, modernization, according to Ingleharts Welzel (2007), is a process by which members of a society can be trained to acquire the attributes of modernizing their society for the good of all citizens. When an individual in a society is modernized he/she becomes a mobile personality that possesses objective and scientific trait. This is to say the individual's mind is open, critical and rational. The mind of these individuals is free from sceptisms, complexes and inhibitions apart from making them to be capable of intelligently avoiding all forms of pitfalls of superstition and callous unproductive elements of tradition. Wani & Bhat (2014) says that it enables the mind/conscience's of the individuals to have empathy or capacity to see itself in other individuals situations as the nations interest supersedes other interests. It equips the minds of individuals to make rational decisions in certain situations and make better or positive structural choices. It makes these individuals to have mobile traits which are not parochially attached to any group or region or to any rigid traditional rules, customs, doctrines, practices and usages. It makes individuals to have psychic verge for only more and more enlightenment and higher and material amenities or symbol reward for better standard of living. It makes individuals to have better understanding, better imaginations and the positive attitude to learn new things and be loyal where they feel convinced.

It makes individual to have a sense of identification and holding a balance between rights and duties and follow the right line of thought and action. The natural assets are that the individuals will be made to portray the qualities of integrity, hard work, consistency and efficiency. The individuals are made to be achievement oriented, motivated by covert feelings of self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment for the good of the society and others, rather than overt rewards such as money, prestige and recognition. They have immense faith in the possibility and desirability of change and have the realization that social, economic and political discipline is an essential pre-requisite for growth and change process in every aspect of life. They will fully develop new thinkings and ideas about wealth, work, entrepreneurship and savings, which is different from what exists in the mind of most people as at today.

In terms of the society of which the above individuals are members, it will begin to radiate the attributes of modernity in its social institution and social milieu, which will invariably manifest forth in some desirable changes rather than in the traditional rigidity. It is a society which will begin to adopt science-based technology and rational end to means calculations. It is a society which will begin to advocate or believe in real co-existence cooperation, consensus and compromise rather than in conflict and competition. It is a society which will begin to accommodate and allow for desirable changes based on the emerging needs, demands and aspirations of the individual members. It is a society which will develop new attitude to wealth creation and possession, work, savings, and risk taking but with the aim of maintaining political, social, cultural, religious and economic discipline for the good of the country.

It implies therefore that since the ecology of modernization presupposes having certain infrastructures such as a wholesome political ideology to be followed by all parties and its effective operation's, viable national economy, open personalities, skilled force, changed values, motivations, functional literate population, concerted national efforts and so on, and all such infrastructures are the gifts of education, we should reassess the UBE programme. The UBE programme has to be restructured in a way it will be for the building up of a new generation of men, women, boys, girls, children who are committed to the process of modernization, through an appropriate training and motivation of the individuals. It is to directly promote in the rising generation those knowledges, develop in them those skills and foster in them those attitudes and values which helps the process of modernization. It must suggest alternative to traditional thinking behaviour and institutions which will encourage

given priority more to productive/vocational works than otherwise scientifically and technologically.

### **Suggestion for Better Implementation of UBE Programme in Nigeria**

As a suggestion for better implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria, the UBE programme should indirectly be restructured to broaden the mental horizon of the individual learners, arouse their interest in innovation and productive works and encourage them in engaging most of the time in experimentation. The production of some future leaders including well equipped creative elites, and knowledgeable elites should be high task of the restructured UBE academic programmes. Great contributions are expected from the restructured UBE programmes in producing scientists, technocrats and other experts from the foundation levels of our schools who are sensitive to the needs, demands and aspirations of a modernizing society. These products are those who will work for the consensus building that is missing in our society today, national emotional integration, brotherhood/sisterhood of man and then generate true awakening for the fatherhood of God to all members of the society. The teachers must not be left out in developing the right outlook and attitude necessary for the transformation of the UBE programme into creative programme in creative environments which are helpful to individual self-fulfillment. It was why Taneja (2010) stated that if the teachers suffer in any way from a distorted backward-working mind they can never have humane, forward-looking and liberalizing influence on the learners. They must be made to rise above narrow ideas and ideals, including religion, tribe, dirty politics, class, location, community, etcetera. They must be given every encouragement needed to ignite in the learners the divine spark in them. In this way the learners heart and mind will be kept open to only all healthy winds of change in the society which is imperative and remains free from obscurantism.

The Nigerian society since Independence is known to be passing through a period of gradual slow and fast transition to effective UBE implementation for National Security and Development. She is seriously committed to an effective democracy, politically, self-sufficiency economically, optimal growth industrially, creativity and innovation educationally, excellent and relevant services socially in order to reduce rate of marginalization in the society. Nevertheless, sixty (60) years after, Nigerians are still witnessing pockets of modernity as against the vast hinterland parts of the country that are

held bound with rigid tradition. This could be the reason we see and hear of insurgency and banditry slogans today. We profess to be a secular society but in actual practice, we have still regionalism, authoritarianism, communalism and linguism. We pledge social justice yet the strong is always dominating the weak as the former's vested interests are at a better advantage of sharing the social services and goods. The non progressiveness and decadence in science education and superstition still prevail in our culture. Dube as cited by Taneja (2010) says that many of our institutions have stubbornly refused to change and to be touched as the most powerful thrusts are resisting modernization as a result of their traditional structure. We should understand that change is inevitable and cannot be denied. As we are observing today, the old attitude of our people to remain silent and engage in a sort of resignation on the part of victims like the Almajiris, street boys or girls neglected on the streets of cities, forest herdsmen and women has become replaced by an attitude of protest. It has been replaced by the grievances shown by their nefarious activities of killing, raping, extortioning of money through kidnapping, rate of selling body parts of humans, unending conflicts and mass attack anytime they feel injustice has been meted out on them.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, having seen that modernization is that which is facing us today with its challenges, and has helped many developed parts of the world to solve their numerous problems such as the reduction of poverty rate, ignorance and physical diseases, conquest of their environment and space, it is logical to join through such programmes like UBE programme. UBE programme can be used as an instrument to accelerate the modernization of our pupils and the society if we are willing to do so. This high task can be achieved by seeing that the UBE programme by its structure becomes a more relevant education that is suited to the genius of our rising generation, whose attitudes and performance have to be radically transformed. The UBE programme planners or designers should have realized by now that an open mobile, empathic, innovative, creative and active participant learner or teacher cannot advance or go far in traditional ethos. Therefore, the UBE programme should be restructured to have the feature of a thorough innovative, productive, creative ethos with strong purpose and good heart in their implementation. The old idea of spending 8 hours in acquisition of knowledge in schools is a traditional structure, the new idea of spending 6 hours in acquisition of productive skills and 2 hours of acquisition of knowledge in schools is a modern structure as applied in Japan, Germany, Britain, USA, Russia, China and India.



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