

Problem of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria and the Role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Enhancing its Quality, Sociological and Counselling Perspective.

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Abstract

The study which was carried out in Ankpa local government of Kogi state to investigate the problems of the Universal Basic Education and the role of ICT in enhancing its quality, used survey research design. The sample of the study was 100 respondents- 80 teachers and 20 teacher counsellors randomly and purposively selected from four out of 400 (four hundred) registered UBE schools. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistic. The decision rule was mean scores from 2.50 and above. The study revealed that the UBE program is still facing various implementation problems of personnel, funding, and infrastructure. To overcome these challenges, counsellors have a lot of roles to play to boost the quality of the man power needed for the nations, self-reliance, scientific and technological development and total empowerment. Teachers should be trained in ICT utilization in teaching science subjects and maths in

primary schools. It was recommended that adequate funds should be provided for the instructional and infrastructural facilities for effective implementation of the UBE programs in Nigeria. Qualified guidance counsellors and teachers should be provided for the UBE institutions to assist in overcoming learners academic and personal social problems.

Key words, Universal Basic Education, Special education, Guidance Counsellors, ICT, Implementation.

1. Introduction

One of the central functions of government at all levels is the provision of qualitative and sound education for the citizens. Consequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE), in 1976, aimed at providing free and qualitative education, establishing equal educational opportunities for all children of school age and gradually reduce illiteracy and ignorance in Nigeria. The UPE gave most citizens of school age and even those who had no means of pursuing education opportunity to receive free basic primary education. However, the Universal Primary Education program was faulted due to inaccurate data on children that would be affected by the scheme for planning and projection; implementation in terms of inadequate public enlightenment and social mobilization, poor quality and social welfare of teachers, inadequate funding which led to the dearth of facilities, poor management of resources available and poor supervision of personnel. These factors promoted its failure and subsequent abolition. Hence, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched in September 1999 (Edho, 2009).

The introduction of UBE emanated from the world conference of Education for all (EFA) held in Jomitten, Thailand in 1990. It was also a response to international recognition of children education as stipulated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) item two which proposed that by 2015, children of educable age should have free, affordable and accessible education and adopted by world nations in 2000.

The main thrust of the programme according to Anaekwe (2009) are to ensure that all 6 (six) years old children are enrolled in primary schools and complete their education; contribute to a massive reduction of illiteracy and dropout rates by making basic education free and compulsory for children; ensure that adults, handicapped children, migrant workers and out-of-school youths have access to basic education; creating skills at junior secondary school level through technical and vocational education and ensure equal access for both boys and girls, thus reducing gender disparities in school enrolment among others.

In order to achieve these, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), restructured the school curricular for the 9 years basic education. The contents of the new curriculum reflect both the emerging and national values. It has been noted however, that since the inception of the UBE scheme, qualified teachers to handle the challenges of quality of instruction has not been massively recruited. Modumogu (2006) opines that among the educational services promised by the government to provide in primary schools, educational resources centre and special teachers trained to teach particular subject are not inclusive. Besides, teachers are not provided in the right quantity and quality despite the stipulation in NPE that teachers be assigned to teach only subjects they are trained to teach.

NPE also states that practical, exploratory and experimental methods be used in teaching but this is not obtainable in the primary schools. Teachers rather use one type of method monotonously in teaching thereby producing passive learners who only memorize facts and cannot think critically and creatively. Enem (2004) equally observed that most products of this level of education lack the skill for literacy, clear expression and logical argument, integrity and self-discipline. This situation may be based on the fact that UBE accommodates children from different socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and maladjustment cannot be ruled out.

Since teachers are vital in education which is the gateway to modernization and development according to kabiru (2001), they need proper training. Contributing, Nwosu (2002) opined that teachers should be trained in computer literacy to enable them educate students who would function effectively in the modern work environment and compete in the global job market. This is supported by the report of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID,2002) that Information Communication Technologies (ICT) have enormous potential as tools to increase information flow and empower poor people.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in simple language means all that is involved in gathering and processing information, using modern communication technologies such as computers and other related equipment so that the service generated can be assessed at reasonable cost and in good time by all that desire them to the overall benefit of mankind (Aneakwe 2008).

Recognizing the importance of ICT, the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria approved a national Information Technology (IT) policy in March 2001 with the vision to make Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the information society using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness. Besides, IT is to be used for wealth creation, poverty eradication, education and global competitiveness. The establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) charged with the implementation responsibility in April 2001, marked its implementation.

However, Robert-Okah (2012) noted that ICT is the least developed area in Nigerian primary and junior secondary schools as only few teachers and students can operate computer. Staff and students at this level are yet to adapt and internalize the new ICT ideas in order to appreciate and work with it thus impeding rapid diffusion of the new ICT technology.

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and personal maladjustment among school children as stated by the Federal Government (FRN, 2004), the stipulation to appoint career officers and counselors ,to train interested teachers as teacher counsellors in schools becomes necessary. Experience has however shown that counselors are not posted to primary schools. The general outcome is maladjusted children with poor self-concept and lack of vocational direction which negates the objective of the UBE programme. Guidance and Counselling according to Okeke (2003) is specialized and developmental services aimed at assisting individuals by trained and qualified counsellors to achieve understanding, acceptance of self and live a productive life. Guidance and counselling furnishes clients with needed information for major decisions in vocational, educational and personal-social areas of life to achieve adjustment. While educational concerns relate to development of effective study habits and choice of subjects, vocational counselling relates to assisting individuals to understand self and the world of work, Socio-personal counselling deals with emotional, social and personal (relationship)problems encountered by individuals .

2. Statement of the Problem

In 1976, the Federal Government trained one hundred and sixty three thousand (163,000) teachers to raise quality staff for the UPE program. Yet, the UPE scheme did not record much success. The Federal Government then approved major changes in the nation's educational policies which culminated to the introduction and adoption of the UBE scheme to fulfil the aim of education for all with emphasis on free access, equity, literacy, numeracy and lifelong skills for all as endorsed at the world conference on education in 1990. In spite of the Federal Government's effort to achieve her anticipated objectives of UBE, the scheme has not registered meaningful impact in the society. Considering the importance of the UBE, it has become pertinent to investigate problems facing the implementation of the program, the role of ICT in enhancing its quality as well as its implications for counselling.

2.1 Purpose of the study:

This study investigated the problems of the UBE program, the role of ICT in enhancing the quality and its implications for counselling in terms of:

- the extent UBE has provided free, qualitative and universal basic education,
- the extent UBE has reduced the incidence of dropout from formal school system through the provision of quality basic education, and
- Assess the role of ICT in enhancing the quality of the UBE programme.

2.2. Scope of the study: This study was limited to the problems of the universal basic education, the role of ICT in its implementation and implication for counselling. The study was carried out in UBE primary schools in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State.

2.3. Research Questions

- To what extent has UBE provided free and qualitative, universal basic education in the primary schools?
- To what extent has the UBE program reduced the incidence of drop out from formal school system through the provision of quality basic education?
- What are the roles of ICT in enhancing the quality of the UBE program?

3. METHOD

The study which was carried out in Ankpa local government of Kogi state used a descriptive survey research design. The sample of the study was 100 respondents consisting 80 teachers and 20 teacher counsellors randomly and purposively selected from four out of 400 (four hundred) registered schools where UBE program is operational in Ankpa local Government Area. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection.

The questionnaire was face validated by experts in measurement and evaluation, and guidance and counselling whose corrections enhanced the final draft production. A reliability coefficient of .74 was obtained using Chronbach alpha method of reliability analysis. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistic (mean scores). The decision rule was mean scores from 2.50 and above. Real limit of numbers was used to interpret the data.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Research Question One: To what extent has UBE provided free, qualitative and universal basic education?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent Ube Has Provided Free, Qualitative and Basic Education

s/n	Items	Mean	S.Dev	Remark
1	UBE has helped to provide free education	2.52	1.01	High extent
2	UBE has not done anything to improve quality education due to lack of qualified teachers.	2.35	1.07	Low extent
3	UBE has little quality to offer to education due to lack of basic teaching and learning materials like adequate classrooms and desks for both teachers and pupils.	2.70	1.08	High extent
4	UBE is not really free because of all the levies paid in the school	2.91	.93	“
5	There are schools for adults, challenged and migrants in the area.	1.75	1.02	Very low extent

N0= 100

From the Table, the respondents agreed that UBE has helped to provide free education to a high extent. It has little to offer to quality education because the basic materials are not on ground; it is not universal as the focus is mainly on normal children.

4.2. Research Question Two: To what extent has UBE reduced the incidence of dropout from formal school system through the provision of free and quality basic education?

Table 2: Mean Scores on the Extent UBE has Reduced the Incidence of Drop Out from schools.

S/No	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
6	UBE has reduced drop-out since books are provided freely.	3.04	.85	Very High extent
7	UBE practices free lunch for children thereby reducing drop-out	2.51	.88	High extent
8	UBE is free, so people no longer drop out due to none payment of school fees	2.36	.99	Low extent

9	UBE has helped more children to go back to school since schools are located close by.	2.83	1.07	High extent
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No. = 100, SD= Standard deviation

Result from the table show that the respondents agreed that UBE has helped reduce drop out through free books, free schooling and proximity to their residences.

4.3. Research question three; what is the roles of ICT in enhancing the quality of UBE

Table 3; mean and standard deviation of responses on the role of ICT in enhancing the quality of UBE

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Dec
10	Empowering citizens by enabling online teamwork for increased collaboration and information sharing through the use of email, phones among teachers	3.47	.64	Agree
11	Enabling the rapid creation and inexpensive distribution of educational information and knowledge among stake holders and teachers	3.19	.80	“
12	Encouraging professional development, in-service-training and mentoring for lifelong learning for teachers	3.30	.74	“
13	Increasing motivation for the learners through the use of multimedia such as sound, video, graphics, animation and text	3.14	.86	“
14	Allowing each student to learn at his/her level and speed thereby giving pupil greater control over their own learning.	3.26	.77	“
15	Promoting active rather than passive learning.	3.29	.87	“
16	Enhancing the development of the abilities of mentally and Physically challenged students.	3.30	.74	“
17	Engaging students in research and problem solving, thereby facilitating higher-order thinking processes such as synthesizing, interpreting and hypothesizing.	2.91	.93	“

From the table, ICT will enhance information sharing and help pupils become active among others.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that the UBE program is not totally free because, levies charged by the UBE board or ministry of education have made the program more costly. This may be as a result of poor management of available resources to meet the needs of the programme according to Ikoya (2000). The program is also not universal because it only focuses only on the formal school learners from primary school to junior secondary school III (JSS III) neglecting the needs of the adults, and other special groups as embedded in the UBE policy.

The reduction in the rate of school dropout through UBE implementation was largely due to the free books, food and proximity to their homes. Lack of funds for the UBE program in the study area has led to non-provisions of adequate infrastructure and personnel towards achieving the educational goals. This confirms Eya and Nebos (2001) statement that lack of instructional and infrastructural materials and funding may affect implementation of UBE. These factors equally led to the fall of UPE and one would have thought that the government will take corrective measures to make UBE succeed.

On the role of ICT in enhancing the quality of UBE, the result shows that ICT will help the teachers share information with colleagues and stakeholders among others. It will equally help pupils become active learners and engage in problem solving among others. Since the Nigerian National Policy on Education lists computer education as one of the subjects at the primary school level (FRN, 2004) and considering the report of Department for International Development (DFID,2002,) that Information Communication Technologies (ICT) (which include computer) has enormous potential as tools to increase information flows and empower poor people, Nwosu's (2002) suggestion that teachers should be trained in computer literacy to enable them educate students who would function effectively in the modern work environment and compete in the global job market should be followed to enhance the UBE programme. Abdulfattah (2007) suggested that at the primary level, pupils should be taught logical reasoning under mathematics as from the fourth year. In the fifth and sixth years, computer studies should be introduced with emphasis on practical under computer education.

6. CONCLUSION

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program is still facing various implementation problems especially, funding, personnel and infrastructure. To overcome these challenges, the use of ICT as a force to drive scientific and mathematical subjects in Nigerian schools should be a major undertaking, an investment in the future productivity of the Nigerian workforce because it can enhance the quality in educational acquisition in Nigeria, boost the man power needed for the nation's scientific and technological development and total empowerment for the future prosperity of the country. Moreover sufficient funds are needed to establish and maintain ICT in the schools. Also, continuing professional development of teachers, school heads and other educational personnel must be instituted.

It however requires the total support of and collaboration with all agencies in the education system especially the counselor whose major concern is the adjustment of individuals – both teachers and pupils in their academic, vocational and personal social aspects of life.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- I. Adequate funds should be provided for the instructional and infrastructural (including ICT) facilities for effective implementation of the national policy objectives of the UBE programs in Nigeria.
- II. Adequate and qualified teachers and guidance counsellors should be provided for the UBE institutions to assist in overcoming learners academic and personal social problems.

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