

## Role of Non-Formal Education (NFE) Under Universal Basic Education (UBE) Law in Nigeria

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**Abstract** *The paper described the concept and scope of Non-Formal Education (NFE), traced the origin of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria and tried to explain the set-backs in the implementation of Universal Basic Education scheme in Nigeria. The relationship between the objectives of Non-Formal Education and Universal Basic Education under the Universal Basic Education law was highlighted and a proposal for a way forward for the implementation of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria through Non-Formal Education System was discussed.*

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### Introduction

There is no doubt that Non-Formal Education (NFE) plays a critical role in the full and appropriate implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme, especially in the third world countries where over two thirds of the population have no access to Basic Education offered through the formal school system. In Nigeria for instance, Ngwu (2003) observed that;

*The formal school system is characterized by a near total collapse in functioning and in puts. Nigeria has the fifth largest illiterate and innumerate population in the world with almost half the citizenry still unable to read and write even though the country started the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme in 1976; the National Mass Literacy Programme in 1982 and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in 2000. Despite all these initiatives, the country's level of educational development is estimated to be fifty years behind that of educationally advanced countries (P. viii).*

Similarly, Abubakar (2008), in his article, captioned, "Stakeholders Examine Basic Education Challenges" reported inter alia that;

*(i) According to the UBEC boss, with over 10 million children of school going age not in school, there was the urgent need by all stakeholders to wake up from slumber, as there were still thousands others with special needs who desired attention and must be catered for.*

*(ii) His counterpart in the National Agency for Mass Literacy and Adult Education (NMEC), Dr. Dayo Ojagunju provided a more horrifying picture of the number of illiterates, when he said that, over 60 million of Nigerians were not able to read or write. The situation, he said would make nonsense of any effort being made by the UBEC, unless attention is paid by States and Federal Governments to the non-conventional education, just like its counterpart (the formal system) (P. 2).*

Coincidentally, based on the UBE ACT 2004, Obong (2006) said, "Universal Basic Education" is defined thus; "Universal Basic Education" means, early childhood care and education, the nine years of schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl-child and women, almajiri, street children and disabled groups (P.2). Under the law of UBE however, it thus appears that, Non-Formal Education's role is yet to be made compulsory or mandatory, free and universal, thereby raising several issues on the effective implementation of Universal Basic Education Programmes as a means of providing functional literacy for all in Nigeria. Consequently, in the remaining part of this paper or discussion, an attempt is made to;

(i) Describe the concept and scope of Non-Formal Education.

- (ii) Briefly trace the origin of UBE in Nigeria.
- (iii) Explain the set-backs in the implementation of UBE in Nigeria.
- (iv) Describe the relationship, if any, between the objectives of Non-Formal Education and Universal Basic Education in Nigeria under UBE law.
- (v) Identify obstacles, if any, currently militating against NFE programmes' implementation under UBE law.
- (vi) Propose a way forward for implementation of UBE in Nigeria through NFE system.
- (vii) Summarize and conclude the discussion above.
- (viii) References

### Concept and Scope of NFE

Several scholars and practitioners have attempted the definition of Non-Formal Education, such as Coombs (1973), Coombs with Ahmed (1974:8), Ngwu (2003) and Arikpo (2007). Non-Formal Education is defined by Coombs (1973:11) and Coombs with Ahmed (1974:8), according to Ngwu (2003:13) as; "any organized educational activity outside the established formal system whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning objectives". This definition tends to distinguish non-formal education from the formal education system. Arikpo (2007:56) supported this view when he opined that, "Non-Formal Education, as a form of adult education, offers programmes essentially, based on the principles and practice of "Extra-Mural and Remedial Studies. Similarly, Ngwu (2003:24) said, "the view that, non-formal education can substitute for and/or complement formal education in both developed and developing countries" was shared by majority of writers on the subject. Also, Islam and Mia (2007) shared the same view, by explaining that;

*Non-Formal education operates alongside the formal education system. It is flexible in terms of curriculum, organization and management, responsive to the needs of special group of learners and inclusive of all who wish to learn (P.2).*

The faith in the potentials of Non-Formal education as a powerful vehicle for development, has been retained by many advocates knowledgeable in its scope. For instance, Ngwu (2003:25) in Arikpo (2007:56), see Non-Formal Education as a means to;

- (i) *Provide education to those for whom schooling is not a realistic alternative.*
- (ii) *Circumvent cultural obstacles that prevent some people from utilizing school effectively.*
- (iii) *Use scarce educational resources more efficiently and modify the schooling system itself.*

### Origin of UBE Scheme in Nigeria

Ejar, Enyl and Osam (2006:13-15) in their article, "Towards Building the Universal Basic Education Programme on a Firm and Sustainable Foundation in the New Millennium", gave the historical antecedents of UBE in Nigeria, summarized as follows;

(i) That during the colonial period, the Chief Obafemi Awolowo led government of the defunct Western Region introduced the Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE) in 1955.

(ii) In 1974, the Gowon Administration declared its intention to adopt the same policy as a national policy. However, Gowon's administration did not last long enough to implement this policy.

(iii) The Obasanjo's regime took up the challenge, and in 1976, the Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE) was launched by General Olusegun Obasanjo at the Oke Suna Municipal Primary, Lagos. Mean while, the Somade Committee appointed by the Federal Ministry of Education in 1969 to work on the UPE projects, submitted its report in 1970, and recommended the phased-implementation of the programme. However, these recommendations were not made public.

(iv) In 1973, the Federal Ministry of Education revised the implementation schedule in order to achieve

the maximum 100% enrolment in 1982. The then Federal Military Government assumed the full responsibility for funding the programme, having the states as mere agents. However, by 1981, it became quite clear that, all the projects made and funds allocated for the programme were either grossly inadequate or mismanaged, hence the Federal Government withdrew all grants and subventions to the states and local governments, and this sort of ended the scheme.

(v) In 1988, the defunct Babangida regime tried to resuscitate the programme by introducing the free Primary Education Scheme. The defunct Babangida Administration, had plans to introduce a 9-year free basic education programme, which according to the then Minister of Education, Prof. Babatunde Fafunwa, included giving youths and adults essential knowledge, skills as well as attitude that contemporary society demands for wholesome living. This programme did not leave the drawing board, however, according to Newswatch (January 17; 2000:11). This particular attempt at eliminating illiteracy, included the establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non- Formal Education in 1990, the launching of the International Literacy year at the National Theatre, Igbamu, Lagos in 1990, the establishment of State Agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education within the decade of 1982 to 1992, the establishment of Normadic Education Commission, the National Primary Education Commission and the Women Commission giving them legal status through the enactment of relevant decrees and edicts. However, their efforts have not succeeded in raising the literacy rates in Nigeria to the desired level.

(vi) The UBE came on board in 1999, under the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic administration in Nigeria. Obong (2006) reported that, in keeping with the provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Mr. President assented to the UBE Bill on the 26th May, 2004 titled: "An Act to Provide for Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education and Other Related Matters".

According to Obong (2006:3-4);

(i) The Act mandates every Government to provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary age. Parents are obliged to ensure their children enroll and complete the basic education cycle. Penalties are prescribed for non compliance by parents.

(ii) Services in public primary and junior secondary schools shall be free of charge. Penalties are prescribed for persons who charge or receive fees in respect of primary and junior secondary education in public schools.

(iii) While recognizing the statutory responsibility of states and local governments in the provision of primary and secondary education, the Act provides for Federal Government's intervention in basic education as assistance to states and local governments in Nigeria for purpose of uniform and qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria.

(iv) The Act establishes the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) its functions, membership and terms of appointment of members.

(v) The Act provides three sources of funding for implementation of the UBE, viz;

(a) The Federal Government Grant of not less than 2% of its consolidated Revenue Fund.

(b) Funds or contributions in the form of Federal Guaranteed Credits.

(c) Local and international grants.

For any State to benefit from the Federal Government block grant, such a state shall contribute not less than 50% of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the projects. However, the responsibilities for the disbursement of the funds lies with the Universal Basic Education Commission.

The Act also provides for the establishment of State Universal Education Board (SUBEB) and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) for States and Local Governments respectively.

The Act provides sanctions for parents who fail to send their children and wards to school. The Act is also a call-to-action on the issue of poverty as a hindrance to schooling. This has led to the abolition of user fees and provision of free textbooks in the core subjects.

## Set-Backs in the Implementation of UBE in Nigeria

In spite of the enormous effort of the Federal Government made towards the provision of Basic Education in Nigeria, especially under the UBE law or Act of 2004, yet several key stakeholders have reported major obstacles in the implementation processes. Some of these stakeholders are notably; Arubayi (2007), Abubakar (2008) and Eddy and Akpan (2009). For instance, Professor Eric Arubayi, a one time Ag. Vice-Chancellor, Delta State University, Abraka, and now Professor of Educational Administration and Planning in the same University, delivering the 26th Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Distinguished Lecture Series in (2007), titled, "An X-Ray of Problems and Issues of Free and Compulsory Education in Africa and Challenges to Nigerian School Administrators, described the following, among others, as some of the obstacles to the UBE implementation in Nigeria; viz:

(i) Relevant data that are required for planning are either not available or falsified. Data on enrolment, promotion rate, repetition rate, dropouts, withdrawals, per pupil cost, funding, to mention a few are very relevant to educational planning. For instance, Fafunwa according to Arubayi (2007:2) reported that the problem of inadequate planning, as a result of over-falsification or underestimation of data, also plagued the UBE scheme that was launched in 1999.

(ii) In his contributions, Abubakar (2008:2) reported among others that;

(a) The scheme, itself has been subject of perception, more often seen as a kind of milk cow or avenue for sharing of national cake.

(b) There are allegations that some state governments have been paying lip service to the issue of payment of counterpart funding, necessitating some states governments not having been able to access their funding to rehabilitate the primary and junior secondary which are supposed to be the target of the programme.

(c) Statistics indicated that there were about 590,665 teachers attending to pupils population of 24.77 million across the country, with about 338,758 additional teachers required to achieve the EFA goals by 2015.

(iii) In their empirical study, titled "The Prospect of UBE Programme in Akwa Ibom State; South-South Nigeria, Eddy and Akpan (2009:047-049) found out among others that;

(a) On planning the UBE scheme, 87% of the respondents agreed that poor planning is one of the major problem that is facing the successful implementation of the scheme.

(b) On funding the UBE scheme, 90% of the respondents agreed that the UBE programme is not properly funded.

(c) On lack of qualified teachers, 60% of the respondents agreed that, there are qualified teachers, while 70% also agreed that the teachers were not adequate for the successful implementation of the scheme.

(d) On proper implementation of the UBE Scheme, 90% of the respondents agreed that the Scheme was not properly implemented.

(e) On the issue of population explosion being a problem for the UBE Scheme implementation, 100% of the respondents agreed.

The above findings, it should be noted, are not peculiar to Akwa Ibom State, but a national crisis, which has been making it quite difficult for the Nigerian government specifically and other African countries in general, to implement any programme on key social and economic development, such as functional illiteracy and poverty rates reduction, women and special interest groups empowerment. In this regard, Dike (2002) in his article titled, "The State of Education in Nigeria and The Health of the Nation", disclosed that, "*soon after Mr. President launched the UBE Programme in 1999, the Federal Government reported that, the falling standard of education in Nigeria is caused by acute shortage of qualified teachers in the primary school level,... that about 23% of the over 400,000 teachers employed in the nation's primary schools do not possess the Teachers Grade II, even when the National Certificate of Education is the minimum educational requirement one should possess to teach in the nation's primary school... That most of the schools are in*

*dilapidated states... that out of less educated local government counsellors are paid higher salaries than those of University Professors", etc, (P.2).*

### Relationship Between the Objectives of NFE and UBE Under UBE Law

The primary relationship between the NFE and UBE objectives under the UBE law as far as this paper is concerned is the provision of "Functional Basic Education" (FBE) for all citizens resident in Nigeria, especially the youths, women and other illiterate adults. Basic literacy so to say, has always been sort after, due to its empowerment capabilities on the recipients, which make them to be gainfully employed either by someone else or by themselves. "Basic Literacy of the reading, writing and counting instructional objectives was officially introduced in Nigeria by the Missionaries in 1842" (Omolewa, 1988:2). Mohamed (1989:2) observed that, in literacy development, the beginning emphasis is on the teaching of the 3hrs-reading, writing and "arithmetic". Arikpo (2007:7) listed other advantages of basic literacy to include the following:

- (a) It enables the learner to know and appreciate the education of others.*
- (b) It helps in managing one's business personally.*
- (c) It lays foundation for further education.*

It was as a result of having received this basic education that every Nigerian/African who completed the scheme successfully gained employment with the colonial administration as clerks, mission teachers, etc. As expected, the objective of basic literacy, according to Akinpelu (1989) in Arikpo (2007:10-11) shifted to Functional Literacy in 1960 at the Montreal, Canada's Ministers' Conference. This shift gave rise to the Tehran, Iran Education Minister's Conference in 1965, where functional literacy was formally adopted as a new concept and strategy for literacy education. Omolewa (1985) thus defined functional literacy as, "the ability to read and write plus the ability of the (adult) learner to apply skills to major knowledge anew" (P.4). Kagiocibasi (2005) in Kolawole and Adepoju (2007) said functional literacy is particularly important in developing countries, especially in rural areas where education has not reached significant population. What constitutes basic education is always changing in line with the challenges which the society faces, but the recipients must be those who are required to have it, as the minimum skills for gainful employment. It is in this regard, that basic education shifted its objectives to vocational literacy about 1975, according to Arikpo (2007:13) and Akinpelu (1989:4). Arikpo (2007:14) argued that, vocational skills development is an improvement from functional skills development, just like functional skills development is an improvement from basic skills of the 3Rs. Akinpelu (1989) said that the new model acts as follows:

*It releases the person's power and energy to act; it frees him from all shackles in the way of his authentic self development; it makes him self-reliant and self-confident, restores his humanity; his self-pride as being the subject, rather than an object, agent rather than passive recipient of other peoples benefactors... hence, earning it the name, "Psycho-socio Literacy Model (P. 4).*

By way of comparison, the objectives of Non-Formal Education and Universal Basic Education under UBE Law are seeking, among others, to produce individuals who, upon completion of their courses of study, acquire basic education that enable them to have; basic, functional and vocational skills in the same person, upon completion successfully, for either gainful employment by someone else or by themselves, so as to reduce incidence of poverty. For instance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004, section 3:13 describes Basic Education as follows:

*Basic Education shall be of a 9 year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years junior education. It shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary levels for adults and out of school youths (P.12).*

Both the Non-Formal Education (NFE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programmes are the programmes of governments of Nigeria established by enabling legislations, known variously either as Decree or Act (Federal) Edict (State) and Ordinance (Local) governments. In effect, their operations are legitimate, and based on merit.

## Obstacles Militating Against Successful Implementation of Nfe Programmes Under Ube Law

A major obstacle against the successful implementation of NFE programmes under UBE law is structural in nature. The Non-Formal Education programme in Nigeria under the law does not have training structures of their own, which both staff, learners and other key stakeholders could enter into freely and carry out their legitimate duties. In terms of physical structures, the buildings and premises used for Non-Formal Education Programmes, are essentially hired from other organizations or individuals on temporary basis. Both the instructors and learners function on part-time basis, which tends to affect the administrative staff effectiveness. According to Hall (1974) in his article, "The Nature and Consequences of Structure", he said that:

*The idea of structure is simple. Buildings have structures in the form of beams, interior walls, passways, roofs, and so on... The analogy of organizational structures to those of buildings is not perfect, since organizations are not built by architects, but by people within them. But the factors that affect or determine the structure of buildings do the same for organizations (P.10).*

The interacting influences of size, technology, environment and choice on organizational structures, do affect their effectiveness. By organizational structure, Blau (1974:12) in his Book "On Nature of Organizations" meant... "the distributions, along various lines of people among social positions that influence the role relations among these people". Also, ranks or hierarchy, the positions that people fill in an organization have rules and regulations that specify, in varying degrees, how incumbents are to behave in their positions.

Organizational structures serve two basic functions, according to Hall (1974:102).

*First, such structures are designed to minimize or at least regulate the influence of individual's variations on the organization. Second, structure is the setting in which power is exercised, in which decisions are made and in which the organizations activities are carried out.*

The impact of ambiguous and too often, non-existing professional structures, for the practice of Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes, concerning the implementation of Nigeria's UBE programmes by the Non-Formal Education people in Nigeria, has been quite disadvantageous. For instance, under the UBE law, Nigeria's "Basic Education" scope, although universal, has been quite "restrictive", and largely in favour of the "Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and its States and Local Government Structures. While under the UBE law, massive projects in form of buildings, recruitment of staff and teachers, training of staff and teachers, books, vehicles and other teaching and learning facilities are provided for UBEC and its SUBEBS partners, such structures are none existent as far as the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and its State Agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education (SAANES) counterparts are concerned. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by UBEC and SUBEBS, etc, is never provided for NMEC, and SAANES. These structural constraints on the implementation of UBE in Nigeria, however, overlook the fact that, all those who due to various extenuating circumstances, could not have access to the UBE programme in Nigeria under UBEC and SUBEBS platforms, shall as of necessity and by law, be provided their Universal Basic Education by the NMEC, SAANES and Local Government NFE staff, including those that require continuing and remedial education offered by the Departments of Adult and Continuing Education of Federal and State Universities. It is estimated that those who require UBE programme in Nigeria under UBE law, through the NFE system constitute about 66%, because UBEC and SUBEBS structures could only accommodate 33% as per Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers of 1999 Primary School Final Class Pupils and the Percentage that Transited to Junior Secondary School One in all States of Nigeria and Abuja Federal Capital Territory

State	No of Primary VI Pupils in 1999	No of JSS1 Students in 2000	% of Pupils Transiting
Abia	102,275	16,374	16.01%
Adamawa	58,661	5,815	9.91%
Akwa Ibom	76,000	21,727	28.59%
Anarnbra	59,461	32,063	64.82%
Bauchi	81,756	13,785	16.66%
Bayelsa	32,708	6,369	19.17%
Benue	67,152	9,637	14.35%
Bomb	81,008	6,629	8.18%
Cross River	50,200	15,323	30.52%
Delta	86,537	40,536	46.84%
Ebonyi	42,283	2,513	5.94%
Edo	101,373	45,321	44.71%
Ekiti	43,840	6,127	13.97%
Enugu	42,647	23A643	55.02%
Gombe	56,766	17,650	31.09%
Imo	82,554	13,916	16.86%
Jigawa	72,927	4,656	6.38%
Kaduna	57,927	17,955	31.20%
Kano	159,741	32,286	6.31%
Katsina	74,589	13,398	17.96%
Kebbi	25,738	19,540	75.92%
Kogi	65,934	17,501	27.38%
Kwara	42,670	14,533	99.61%
Lagos	93,801	q3,433	99.61%
Nasarawa	31082	16,383	42.07%
Niger	40,432	19,295	47.72%
Ogun	59,947	41,906	69.91%
Ondo	66,757	30,295	45.38%
Osun	63,477	38,719	60.10%
Oyo	112,800	67,841	60.14%
Plateau	53,701	28,620	53.30%
Rivers	50*853	28,769	S6.S7%
Sokoto	52,822	11,647	22.04%
Taraba	52,004	5,728	2.43%
Yobe	78,735	9,461	12.02°h
Zamfara	30,619	6,860	22.40%
FCT Abuja	20,675	10,936	52.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,391,779</b>	<b>806,811</b>	<b>33.73%</b>

Source; *Federal Ministry of Education: Baseline Data 2001, in Biao, 2006: 12-13.*

Biao (2006:14) remarked that, *going by the fact that only few Nigerian youths get places in primary schools, the picture just painted suggests that majority of Nigerian youths are denied education... They eventually grow up into adulthood to swell up the already existing large population of adult illiterates.*

## A Way Forward in Implementation of UBE in Nigeria Through NFE System

(i) Obviously one major way forward is for the government to ensure that, those who should acquire UBE skills out-of-the formal school system, are given the opportunities to do so through NMEC, SAANES and LAANE structures. In the circumstances, all the structures of State Agencies for Non- Formal Education established by enabling Laws or Edicts, shall have to be made fully functional and accountable. For instances, State Agencies without their Board of Directors, shall have to ensure such Boards are re-introduced for the purpose of performing their legitimate duties assigned by law to them. It should be noted that, such duties could not be effectively carried out by the Directors and their administrative staff.

(ii) Aggressive recruitment of staff to teach learners such as out- of-school children, youths, women and other special interest groups should be carried out, similar to those constantly under taken for the formal school pupils.

(iii) Funding of Non-Formal Education at Federal, State and Local Government levels under UBE Law shall have to be provided in proportion to the estimated number of those who could not gain access to Basic Education programmes through the formal school system, and that proportion is about 66% as earlier said.

(iv) Special Continuing Education and Non-Formal Education Study Centres shall have to be built in Nigeria for the target learners, similar to the formal UBE schools. Example of such study centres and schools have the impact of giving ownership status to Non- Formal education learners, rather than the current situation wherein these category of learners roam about due to lack of appropriate study centres and learning environments. Countries like, Tanzania, Bangladesh and India, etc, which have similar problems of high populations of illiterates and poverty have made appreciable results in their provision of Education for All (EFA) under UBE law, through the establishment of NFE schools/study centres.

(v) Discipline, better planning, data gathering and coordination of NFE Universal Basic Education Programmes would be greatly improved, if the instructors and organizers work on full-time basis.

(vi) There is need for collaboration of efforts under UBE law between the Formal and Non-Formal Education managers in Nigeria at Federal, State and Local Government levels, so as to promote inclusive learning and a literacy culture in Nigeria.

(vii) The Departments of Adult and Non-Formal or Continuing Education of Higher Institutions of learning shall have to be given the special mandate of providing; train-the-trainers, research and appropriate communities services for both NMEC, SAANE and related NGOs on NFE under the UBE Scheme.

(viii) The annual conferences of Heads of Departments of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Federal/State Ministries, Institutions of Higher Learning and NGOs, shall have to be vigorously and regularly organized so as to continue improving the theory and practice of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria and beyond.

## Summary and Conclusion

In this discussion, effort has been made to draw attention to the fact that, under the UBE law in Nigeria, the country could only provide education for all her citizens if NMEC, SAANE and LAANE are made more autonomous, directly accountable and the instructors work on full-time rather than on part-time basis. Secondly, special study centres/schools, should be established and controlled by NFE operators so as to give a sense of ownership, credibility and permanence to the theory and management of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria.

Finally, collaboration of efforts between UBEB, NMEC, SUBEB, SAANE, Higher Institutions Departments of Adult and Non-Formal Education, Related Government Agencies such as Nomadic Education Commission, Women Commission, National Orientation Agency and International/National NGOs would have to be built into any serious effort aimed at reducing illiteracy and poverty rates in Nigeria.



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