

## Challenges of Human Resource Management for Effective Implementation of The Universal Basic Education Programme in Rivers State

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### Abstract

*The paper looked at the challenges of Human Resource Development for effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme. In the process, the critical role of the UBE in producing educated and skilled citizens essential to national development was considered as well as the human resource base needed to improve the programmes for relevance and effectiveness. The human resource base needed at the UBE were identified as teachers, administrators, support staff, planners as well as policy makers. In the face of the perceived under-achievement and low capacity of the products in contributing to national development, the paper discussed the challenges facing human resource development for UBE. Finally, suggestions were made for effective human resource development plans and programme.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Human Resources Development, implementation, Universal Basic Education

### Introduction

Education is directly linked to development and every country needing to fast track its development engages education as the basic foundation to lay (Akinbote, 2009) Nigeria as a nation is not left out of this conviction as it accepted education as the basis for pursuing development of the country. In its National Policy on Education, education is tagged "an instrument per excellence" for realizing national development (FRN, 2004). For this reason goals of education are articulated and calculated to have citizens who exude national consciousness, with the right type of values and attitude, understanding the world around them and have the appropriate skills, social abilities and competencies to live in and make positive contributions to self and national development.

To achieve the goals of using education as vehicle for development, the educational system is systematically structured to provide learning experiences, skills and competencies needed for every category of potential in development equation of the nation. In the National Policy on Education, the educational system is structured to provide:

- (a) Early childhood/Primary Education
- (b) Basic Education
- (c) Secondary Education
- (d) Tertiary Education (FRN, 2004)

The basic assumption is that products of any of these levels, beginning from Basic Education, would have been equipped with skills, abilities, attitude and competencies required to contribute at a given level as well as remain useful to themselves. All levels of education are important in contributing to national development. However the emphasis on achieving numeracy, literacy and life long learning has forced attention on Basic Education.

## **What is Universal Basic Education?**

Though all levels of education are important in contributing to national development, the emphasis on basic education has increased for more than two decades apparently to underscore the importance of population in sustaining national development and to emphasize basic education as the key to the success or failure of the whole system (FRN, 2004).

Universal Basic Education though varies from country to country depending on needs and objectives, ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic\\_education](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic_education) 08/09/2012) is fundamentally a 9 year duration education programme comprising Early Childhood Education, 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. Section 3 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004: 13) spells out Basic Education to include adult and non-formal education programmes for adults and young people who are out of regular school. Also the Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia (08/09/2012) refers to basic education as the whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings formal, non-formal and informal that aim to meet basic learning needs.

## **Universal Basic Education In Relation To Education For All And For Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

Universal Basic Education, a priority for national development is central to Education For All and carries the endorsement of Millennium Development Goals. The Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia (08/09/2012) reports that a number of studies have proven the benefits of Universal Basic Education on public health manifested in lower spread of HIV/AIDS, better vaccination, prevention of diseases, better nutrition, lower maternal and infant mortality; on demography manifested in longer life expectancy, accelerated demographic transition through better birth control; on the economy a manifested increase in purchase power, increased productivity in traditional sectors, and increased demand on service sectors. Other benefits said to be difficult to measure are perceived impact on democracy, human rights, governance and political stability through increasing understanding of non-violent ways to solve problems.

## **Underlying Philosophy of UBE ([www.ubeonline.com](http://www.ubeonline.com), 09 08 2012)**

### **Universal Basic Education**

The Universal Basic Education is described as a 9 year basic education programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria aimed at the eradication of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty and cause development, political consciousness and national integration. It is described as Nigeria's strategy for achieving EFA and education related MDGs. It is therefore envisaged that at the end of nine years of continuous education, every child should acquire appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable in order to contribute his or her quota to national development.

### **Scope of Universal Basic Education**

Universal Basic Education is conceived to embrace formal education up to age 15 as well as adult and non-formal education including all education programmes for the advantaged and disadvantaged, the gifted and uneducable, physically challenged and non-challenged, the rural and urban dwellers, the rich and the poor, the nomadic and the secondary (FRN, 2004; Yusuf & Ajere (2008) and Okorosaye-Orubite, 2008). Structurally it includes:

1. Primary Education
2. Junior Secondary Education

### 3. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education

#### **What service provision is needed for effective implementation of universal basic education programme?**

It is not always enough to enunciate education programmes that end up not achieving their goals. The National Policy on Education spelt out numerous provision, activities and structures to make Universal Basic Education succeed. However, it is the Universal Basic Education Revised charter of service that clearly spelt out the service provision needed in the Universal Basic Education. These include:

- (a) Policy formulation, implementation, facilitation and coordination.
- (b) Financial administration which includes sourcing, disbursement and auditing
- (c) Administration of standards, best practices, developing strategies for implementation and harmonization of minimum stands
- (d) Establishment of Data Bank
- (e) Expertise in Funding in Basic Education
- (f) Administration of Master Plan for Basic Education for provision of Basic Education facilities, increased access, Research on funding
- (g) Personnel matters and conditions of Basic Education Schools, Personnel Data/Analysis
- (h) Capacity building for Teachers, Librarians, donor effort coordination and support
- (i) Developing capacity for Partnership interventions
- (j) Sensitization and mobilization for the realization of UBE's objectives, targets and law.
- (k) Capacity for monitoring and evaluation of UBE Programmes
- (l) Capacity building for manager, supervisors, school inspectors, education secretaries and Directors

The Universal Basic Education charter of service cannot be achieved without a human resources base germane to the sector. The implementation of service therefore depends on the availability of the required manpower and which in turn has implication for over all achievement of the targets of the UBE programme. The service provision as contained in the UBE service charter correspondingly provide avenue to address the issues of access, equity, minimum standards and quality assurance facing the UBE programme (FME, 2009).

#### **Any Gap Between Implementation and Achievement?**

The objective of UBE programmes is to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. Though these objectives cannot be achieved overnight, the Roadmap for Nigerian Educator Sector (2009) identified some gaps between implementation and achievement. These are:

- (a) Low learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills
- (b) Continued production of half-baked products that are not sufficiently resourceful and globally competitive.

According to Edem & Okon (2008), the above phenomena exist in spite of the huge achievement recorded so far in terms of:

- (a) the establishment of the framework of relationship between the stakeholders in the form of the UBE ACT, the legal framework
- (b) the provision of new classrooms, furniture and renovation. The provision of infrastructure has witnessed cooperation from international partners such as Japan (2004 – 2008) Korea in year 2010, China, World Bank, UNICEF and UASAIID as well as British Council ([www.ubeonline.com/index2.html](http://www.ubeonline.com/index2.html) 06/09/2012).
- (c) provision of learning and instructional materials
- (d) national mobilization of stakeholders to increase enrolment and retention
- (e) integration of formal education into Qur'an education, Girl child, self-half and HIV/AIDS education

- (f) establishment of monitoring strategies and framework to ensure standard and quality
- (g) massive training and retraining of teachers

However, in spite of this huge gain made, the Nigeria Tribune September 11, 2012 reported the Executive Secondary of Universal Basic Education Communication (UBEC) Dr. Mohammed Modibbo to have said that Nigeria has shortfall of 150,000 teachers for the effective implementation of UBE programme and most of the ones currently in the field are not adequately qualified. This report and similar ones have continually pointed to the human resource base as critical to the effective implementation of the UBE programme in achieving its goals and those set by Education For All targeted at eradicating poverty and illiteracy and developing life long skills in citizens (Edem & Okon, 2008). A critical issue in implementation of the UBE now becomes the question of the contribution of the manpower in terms availability, quality and quantity (Edem & Okon, 2008).

### **What then is Human Resource Base for Effective UBE Implementation?**

The human resource base of any organization comprises of its workforce and ancillaries essential to its operations. Wikipedia, the Free encyclopedia defines human resources as the set of individuals who make up the workforce of an organization, business sector or economy ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanresources](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanresources) - Human Resources. 10/09/2012).

In the Universal Basic Education Programme, the individuals who make up the workforce are identified as:

1. Teachers.
2. School heads.
3. Supervisors.
4. Education directors
5. Guidance / Councilor – organizing orientation for both staff / student
6. Policy makers
7. Curriculum Expert
8. Educational Statisticians
9. Education Information System Analysts
10. Financial Managers
11. Personnel Administrators
12. Engineers
13. Estate Manager and Quality Surveyors
14. Librarians
15. Business Administrators
16. Quality Assurance and Minimum Standard Officers (Edem & Okon, 2008; and [www.sericenigeria.com/charterseducation-ube.doc](http://www.sericenigeria.com/charterseducation-ube.doc) [2/09/2012])

The UBE programme requires the manpower mentioned above to achieve the target of eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. Viability of the UBE programme definitely is linked to the extent to which national goals of sustainable development benefits from the competencies, skills and knowledge offered by the programmes. The knowledge, skills, and competencies derivable from the UBE programme are themselves the function of available resources to the programme especially the critical quality human resources. The achievement of UBE as spelt out in charter of service will then be a function of not only the human resources but also the quality of the human resources and number of services available to realize the goals. The quality of human resources available then will depend on being developed to suit organisational needs of the UBE programme ([www.serviceninigerian.com](http://www.serviceninigerian.com)).

## **Human Resource Development in UBE**

Human resource development means equipping workforce with needed competencies, skills and knowledge for effective task performance and goal achievement. In other words, it is a process of insisting that the workforce of the UBE be performance compliant and target-oriented. McNamara (2011) defines Human Resource Development as the opportunity to provide training, career development, coaching and organizational development for employees. Human Resource Development (HRD) for effective implementation of UBE should aim at achieving the following:

- (a) improving the competitiveness of the Universal Basic Education in developing functional citizenry able to communicate, who is conscious of the world around him and plays vital role in harnessing his environment to prevent poverty, disease, ignorance
- (b) improve the understanding of workforce as valued resource in the entire education process whether they are:
  - ✓ Core staff – teachers, school heads, supervisors, administrators, managers
  - ✓ Technical Staff – planners, curriculum experts, guidance councilors, policy makers, measurement and evaluation expert
  - ✓ Ancillary Portfolio – finance, estate, personnel, infrastructure, technology
- (c) improving workforce attitude to change and innovation and global demand on education for global connectivity ([www.oocities.org/hrm4uoft/chap09](http://www.oocities.org/hrm4uoft/chap09) [02/09/2012])

Human Resource Development for UBE targets building the knowledge and skills of workforce to prepare them to take on new responsibilities and challenges in regularly repositioning UBE for greater performance and contribution to national development (Jones & George, 2003).

### **Types of Human Resource Development**

Developing the Human Resource of the UBE will encompass the following strategies according to Jones & George (2003),

#### **1. Classroom Instruction.**

Instructions may take place within the organization or outside. Jones & George (2003) suggests employees may go to local colleges or universities. This is suitable for core UBE staff.

#### **2. On-the-job-training.**

Learning takes place in the workplace while employees are performing their tasks. All categories of UBE workforce can benefit from these.

#### **3. Varied Work Experiences.**

These development programmes are designed for top managers in technical and ancillary staff categories of UBE. (Jones & George [2003] and Armstrong, [2006]). Varied work experiences focus on developing in top professionals understanding of expertise needed in providing a number of functions, products – (Plans design, strategies) and services. Varied work experiences broaden the employees' views and the UBE programme can now be seen as a big picture.

#### 4. *Formal Education.*

This involves sending top managers of the UBE programme to executive courses that help them obtain specialized higher degrees in the area of chosen interest.

### **Challenges Facing Human Resource Development**

Effectiveness of the Human Resources of the Universal Basic Education has numerous advantages. Successful attainment of the objectives can be achieved in the UBE programme, if the following underlined challenges facing development of human resource capacity needed are identified and addressed appropriately (Armstrong, 2006 & FRN, 2004). They include:

#### 1. *Poor Planning.*

Planning in any sphere of human endeavour relates essentially to making decisions for future actions and choices needed for the effectiveness of any a given process. Like others, Human Resource planning is an integral to the efficient running and continued flourishing of the Universal Basic Education programme. Proper planning for the UBE would ensure infrastructure and human resources needed for the programme are clearly identified and provided for. However since the inception of UBE programme poor planning has been the bane. Odu (2011) identified poor planning for Human Resource Development as a critical challenge in the provision of the UBE programme. This fact is corroborated today by the Executive Secretary of UBE, Dr. Ahmed Moddibo Mohammel when he announced a shortage of 150,000 teaches for the programme. The importance of Human Resource Development Planning for UBE cannot be overemphasized. Planning helps to anticipate personnel needs and helps to ensure imbalance is not created that leads to system deterioration which in turn defeats UBE objectives (['...'](http://www.wiki.answers.com) Business and Industry, 1/05/2013/).

Poor Planning of Human Resource Development for UBE programme may have consequences for the following:

- ✓ hiring wrong persons not suited to teaching job as a result of not adopting the right hiring process of Human Resources Management.
- ✓ allow skills to deteriorate when poor or lack of planning at all would lead to lack of investment in retraining or development of teaching staff who are already in the system (<http://www.wiki.com>, 01/03/2013).

Planning is critical for the effectiveness of any system. The UBE programme definitely needs proper planning to ensure development of effective manpower base and infrastructure provisions.

#### 2. *Funding*

Like most sectors in Nigeria, Education and precisely the UBE programme full funding challenge. Popoola, Bello and Atauda (2009) have argued that the ability to allocate enough funds for education programmes in Nigerian remains the greatest challenge the UBE programme faces. It is assumed that allocation below UNESCO recommended threshold certainly will affect human resources development just as infrastructure, teaching materials and amenities are to be affected, if funding is lacking in Nigeria educational system. Funding is very fundamental to human resources development, utilization and retention in the UBE, in the sense that lack of it, will impact negatively on:

- (a) attracting talents to teaching
- (b) recruitment of quality manpower for teaching
- (c) regular training and retraining of staff of various cadre

- (d) lowering attrition and turnover rate
- (e) work environment
- (f) motivation, commitment and work culture (Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009).

### 3. *Motivation Issues*

The human capital base of any organization, including the education system remains its major input for sustainability. In view of this, most organizations with competitive edge lay over-reaching emphasis on retaining and sustaining its manpower base. Findings by Manzoor (2011) show that employee performance fundamentally depend on many factors among which are performance appraisal, employee satisfaction, compensation, job security, organisational structure, employee motivation, training and development. Employee motivation is targeted at increasing effectual job management. Motivated employees are ready to define goals, objective and targets. While employees' training and development are targeted at increasing the opportunities for employees to acquire skills and knowledge that are linked to career, preparation, readiness, growth and sustainability (<http://www.humanresources.about.com/.../Training/icebreakers,8/03/2013>).

When motivation issues are raised in the UBE programme, growth and career development are essential for staff retention and productivity; issues which are central to workplace achievements. The case of motivation and retention of health workers in developing countries in which it was discovered that a key constraint to achieving MDGs is the absence of a properly trained and motivated workers is a pointer (Willis-Shuttuck, M; Bidwell, P; & Thomas, S. 2005).

Training and development for UBE workers in Nigeria are scarce and sparse and are usually not effectively coordinated and carried out on regular basis.

This is contrary to item viii of UNESCO – UBE Nigeria Report Part III – Prospects in its Implementation Approaches and strategies, which *inter alia* harps on adequate teacher training, recruitment and motivation. There are no system's defined paths of training and development deliberately articulated as is the case with other organizations such as the Nigeria Military and Paramilitary or even multinationals and conglomerates. This has remained a fundamental challenge to both staff quality, productivity and retention.

### 4. *Availability of Training Programme Platforms*

The standard practice in organizations aiming to develop its workforce's capacity to meet organizations need is to identify, develop and retain training resource centres. The Human Resource Division of such organizations now systematically lay out plans for continuous training, retrains and education of the workforce at centres well developed and designated for various cadre ([www.wiki.answers.com/.../Business and industry, 1/03/2013](http://www.wiki.answers.com/.../Business%20and%20industry,1/03/2013)). This is not what is obtainable in the education industry. This therefore is a fundamental challenge given that the Universal Basic Education encompasses basic education and life long learning which challenges the workforce to regularly update in order to provide services germane to the objectives of the programme. Structural platforms for training are then to be clearly erected or created and maintain over time to provide continuous learning space.

### 5. *Appropriateness of Human Resources Development Programmes*

Most programmes lined up for UBE personnel or embarked upon by UBE staff need to be evaluated for their relevance to the needs of UBE workplace. Some staff undergo courses or programmes not relevant to education usually to fulfill the demand for certificate or qualification. The challenge also of adapting training programmes that are foreign is there. In all, all these affect staff performance and similarly impacts negatively on pupils' outcome (Edem & Okon, 2008).

## 6. Shortage of Core Technical Experts.

Though the UBE programme is an education programme, the input from non education services is still an integral part for the success of UBE. Engineers, Surveyors, Programmes, Statisticians, Medical personnel, etc. are needed for wholistic functioning of UBE. Unfortunately, these professional prefer their traditional placements to crossing into education. This obviously has impact on the outcome of services rendered in the UBE.

## 7. Absence of Specialized Department for UBE

A department for UBE needs to be established especially in tertiary institution specialized in education. The lack of specialized department for UBE hampered teaching and researches solely dedicated UBE programmes.

## Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education Programme launched over a decade ago remains important as it is focused towards eliminating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. Much as funding, infrastructure are crucial to its effective implementation, human resource remains a cardinal point without which the programme cannot leave the ground. Human Resource is critical and its continuous development is most critical.

Developing Human Resource of any organization often carries challenge for obvious reasons. These however must always be there and the success of UBE programme will then depend on the challenges identified, faced, tackled and resolved. Challenges such as poor planning, poor funding, lack of motivation, proximity of programmes, appropriateness of development programme and institutional abeyance may affect quality of Human Resource available to UBE.

## Recommendation

1. Adequate Planning for Human Resource Development be made a priority.
2. Funds for regular capacity building and development should be made available.
3. Conditions of service for education workers be made comparable to the best practices in that regard.
4. Programmes for training and development be planned with education staff to enable them identify when it could be convenient to participate.
5. Training and Development Programme must be relevant to the demands of UBE.
6. Sponsorship and exchange programme be arranged to give workers varied learning experiences.

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