

## Wastage Factor in Universal Basic Education Programme Implementation in Nigeria: The Way out

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### **Abstract**

The need to increase the access of the citizens to basic education and achieve reform in the education sector, prompted Federal Government of Nigeria to inaugurate Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999. There was however the expectation that every individual that seeks the basic education will complete the required training and thus enjoy the literacy, numeracy, and communicative skills dividends; further their education or become self-sustained in the society. Amid the implementation of this programme, with the commitment of stupendous financial, human, and material resources to it, it is obvious that not all the children that seek the basic education are completing their training while many among those that complete it do so at additional cost. This paper examines the issue of wastage amid Universal Basic Education programme implementation in Nigeria. Evidences that buttressed the prevalence of the issue of wastage amid the implementation of the programme were gathered from literature just as measures to combat it and ensure that the investment on the programme yield the expected dividends such as: adequate funding of the UBE Programme, recruitment, training and motivation of teachers, combating poverty, provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities; tackling of corruption; proper mobilization of parents against the withdrawal of children from schools; creation of scholarships and bursary opportunities for students at federal, state and local levels, supported by private sector contributions; provision of jobs for graduates of educational institutions; effective monitoring of schools and teachers, among others, were raised.

**Keywords:** Wastage factor, basic education, Universal Basic Education, Nigeria.

In Nigeria, a lot of financial, materials, and human resources go into the education sector in order to make it achieve its objectives. While the financial resources are needed to purchase equipment, pay salaries and allowances of staff, as well as meeting the overhead costs on daily basis, among others in educational institutions, material resources are needed for proper training of pupils/students in the institutions. Human resources, including the teachers and administrators, coordinate the pupils/students and other resources in the institutions, so as to achieve the stated objectives. Provision of human and material resources in educational institution, also depends on the available financial resources. Much of these needed resources are provided by government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), parents, philanthropists, International Charitable Organisations, among others, and complementing government's efforts in the financing of education. Unfortunately, financial allocations to education sector in Nigeria, have been limited (Hinchliffe, 2002; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2013) due to the downturn of economy which has been limiting the allocation to educational institutions at all levels. Educational institutions' administrators thus face the challenge of how to achieve effective and efficient utilization of the limited financial resources accrued to them by Government, amid the expectation of stakeholders and concerned citizens that they should make judicious use of these scarce resources to ensure that students stay for the minimum number of years expected in schools, to promote high efficiency in the educational system.

#### Wastage Concept and Overview of Causes in Nigeria

Ordinarily, education managers are supposed to make use of the limited resources available them to achieve the education objectives. They are thus not expected to utilize more resources above the allocated ones. If the resources used to accomplish education objectives are more than those allocated for these, it implies that there is wastage in the education system. According to UNESCO (1976), wastage in education can be described as pupil/student's attrition and grade repetition. While attrition is the withdrawal of pupil/student from school, repetition is a situation where a pupil/student remains in the same class in subsequent year, has to be taught the same thing using the same facilities and other resources. It is worthy to note that when a pupil/student withdraws from school, the cost of his/her education up to that level would be wasted. Such pupil/student will relapse into illiteracy. A pupil/student that repeats class takes up space, teaching time, textbooks, and other resources that could be devoted to other pupils/students. When many pupils/students repeat classes, some classes are abnormally large thus making teaching difficult for the teachers. It is also of

note that in Nigeria, normal year to be spent on primary education is six (6) years and six also in the case of secondary school. A pupil/student that spends more than the normal years is deemed to have over-utilised resources, both financial, human, and materials. Educational wastage can thus be viewed as the aspect of educational activities that leads to wasteful utilization of scarce educational resources.

Wastage in education system can be attributed to institutional and non-institutional factors. Institutional factors have their origin within the educational institutions. Beeby (1969); Martinez & Monday (1998); Adeyemi & Ajayi (2006) identified teacher's quality and quantity, method of teaching, attitude and commitment, school's learning environment, teacher-pupil/student ratio, unstable school calendar, lack of school guidance, as well as counseling services as institutional variables that account for wastage in education system. The non-institutional factors are outside the purview of educational institutions and encompasses the family and community life and have to do with attitude, economic circumstances, migration (Callaway, 1967), and home background, distance from school, cultural practice, religious doctrine, and poverty of parents (Adesina, 1983).

#### Universal Basic Education Programme and Rationale For It in Nigeria

Prior to year 1999, many loopholes could be observed in the provision of education in various states in Nigeria. Of particular interest is the disparity in access to basic education. Many children that supposed to be in school then, were out of school. According to Adewole (2000), instead of enrollment of 22 million in primary schools in 1995, only 14.91 million enrolled. In 1999, almost all the 11-year-old children enrolled in primary school in the Southern regions but only 36% enrolled in the North. On gender basis, female enrollment was lower than male enrollment in the North but higher than male enrollment in the Southeast (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2007). It was also observed that in 1994, 5,292,860 pupils dropped out of schools within the year, in spite of the poor enrollment. Available infrastructural facilities, teaching, and learning materials, as well as qualified teachers were also inadequate in schools. It was in the light of these that Federal Government, under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, launched Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999.

## Scope and Objectives of Universal Basic Education Programme

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a programme that is planned to toe the pattern of the defunct Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, earlier implemented in the western and eastern regions. Not only does it makes primary education free and compulsory for all children, irrespective of gender, race, and psychological status, it increases its scope by including Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE), Junior Secondary Education, special intervention education targeted at nomadic and migrant children, mass literacy education, education for the ‘Almajiris’, as well as other excluded groups (Adikwu, 2009). According to Tahir (2001); UBE (2002), this intervention is intended to improve equity in Nigeria’s educational system and ensure access to free basic education for all children. It is also designed to promote effective use of resources and quality control, evidenced by reductions in dropout rates and acquisition of appropriate skills such as literacy, numeracy, and life skills. As indicated in the implementation guidelines, Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme aims at:

- developing in the entire citizenry, a strong consciousness for education and commitment to its rigorous promotion;
- providing free universal basic education for every Nigeria’s child of school-going age;
- reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from formal education system through improved relevance, quality, and efficiency;
- catering for the learning needs of young persons, their schooling, through appropriate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- ensuring the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, life skills, as well as ethical, moral, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999).

### Status of Wastage in Universal Basic Education Programme Implementation in Nigeria

The extent of wastage in the course of implementing Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria can be proved by making reference to some literatures on the issue. In this regard, Duze (2011) investigated attrition rates in selected primary schools in Delta State, Nigeria using 5, 545 pupils of 2003 cohort. Findings revealed average attrition

rate (19.24%). While the highest rate (36.60%) was recorded in the public/rural/small school, the lowest (7.24%) was recorded in private/urban/large school. The study also found higher attrition rates in the boys schools and in public than private schools, rural than urban schools as well as in small than in large schools. Adeyemi & Adu (2012) also studied teachers' quality and internal efficiency in primary schools in Ekiti State using 520 primary schools and a cohort of 91,560 pupils of 2003 set who graduated in 2008. Findings revealed high dropout and repetition rates among the pupils. Although the rates revealed decreasing trend, it was 3,450 repeaters and 1,160 dropouts out of the cohort in 2003, which was 1,421 repeaters and 3,471 dropouts as at 2008. Adeyemi (2012) in another study on schools' variables and internal efficiency of secondary schools in Ondo State using 242 out of 295 secondary schools in the State and a cohort of 75,260 pupils of 2002 JSSI set found that there were 2,800 repeaters and 2,180 repeaters out of the cohort in 2003 which decreased to 2,255 repeaters and 1,950 dropouts in 2004 (when the pupils were in JSS3). The number of promoters in primary schools in Ekiti State was also found to be high in each of the years. In addition, Ajayi & Mbah (2008) studied the trend in educational wastage rates in Ekiti State's public primary schools in Nigeria from 2000 to 2006 using 731 public primary schools in the sixteen Local Government Areas in the State. Findings revealed 9.0%, 8.8%, 8.7%, 7.7%, 8.1% and 7.4% as repetition rates for year 2000 to 2006 respectively. As regards the dropout rates, it was 2.1%, 2.3%, 2.2%, 2.0% and 1.5% from 2000 to 2006 respectively. Apart from literature so reviewed, Data in Table 1 show the grade repetitions and dropout rates in UBE as at year 2008.

Table 1.

## Grade Repetition and Dropout Rates in Nigeria in 2008

	School Grade					
Background Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Repetition Rates					
Sex						
Male	2.6	2.3	1.7	1.3	1.1	5.6
Female	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.1	1.4	3.5
Residence						
Urban	2.3	2.1	2.5	1.8	0.8	4.4
Rural	2.7	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.5	4.7
	Dropout Rates					
Sex						
Male	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	10.3
Female	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	12.9
Residence						
Urban	2.3	2.1	2.5	1.8	0.8	4.4
Rural	2.7	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.5	4.7

Source: 2008 DHS. Abuja, Nigeria

Data in Table 1 show the pattern of repetition and dropout rates in primary schools in Nigeria in year 2008. As indicated in the Table, the least repetition rate was recorded in grade 5 (for both male and female) while the highest was in grade 6 (5.6% and 3.5%) for male and female respectively. As regards the dropout rate, the highest rate was in grade 6 (10.3% and 12.9%) while the least was in grade 2 (0.2% for both sexes). Apart from dropout and repetition cases, enrolment and completion rates as well as the transition rates from primary to secondary schools can buttress that wastage is endemic amid UBE implementation in Nigeria.

Table 2.

## Net Enrolment &amp; Completion Rates in Primary Education in Nigeria

	Enrolment Rates (%)			Completion Rates (%)		
	1991	2008	Change (%)	1991	2008	Change (%)
Male	64.6	63.5	-1.70	93.3	81.8	-12.33
Female	50.8	56.5	11.22	77.5	68.2	-12.00

Source: United Nations Statistics, cited in Abonyi, O.S; Nwoba, P.A and Attamah, G.G. (2011). Reforms in Science, Technology, Engineering Education (STEM): Evaluation of the AU/NEPAD African Action Plan.

As indicated in Table 2, male enrolment rate was 64.6% in 1991 but decreased to 63.5% in 2008. Female enrolment was 50.8% but increased to 56.5% in 2008. Male completion rate was 93.3% in 1991 but decreased to 81.8% in 2008. The female completion rate was 77.55% in 1991 while it was 68.2% in 2008.

Table 3.

Transition Rates from Primary to Junior Secondary Level in Nigeria: 2007-2009

2007		2008		2009	
Primary	JSS1	Primary	JSS1	Primary	JSS1
21,122,583	2,791,157	21,121,157	2,826,800	21,714,314	3,102,065

Source: Universal Basic Education, Planning, Research and Statistics Department

As indicated in Table 3, out of 21, 121, 583 pupils in primary six in 2007, only 2, 791, 157 gained access to Jss1 class. In 2008, 2,826,800 were in JSS1 as against 21,121,157 in primary six in the same year. As at 2009, although the number in JSS1 rose to 3, 102, 065, this can still be considered to be low when compared to 21,714,314 in primary six in the same year.

#### Way Out of Wastage in Universal Basic Education Programme Implementation in Nigeria

It is imperative for wastage to be eradicated in the education system of Nigeria, in view of its implications on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. To achieve this feat, Government should:

*Orientate Parents/Guardians:* Through Print and Electronic Media, parents/guardians and students should be given orientation against premature withdrawal of their children from schools.

*Fund UBE Programme Adequately:* Funding is a critical issue in education provision as only adequate funding could guarantee adequate provision of materials and human resources that are necessary for effective operation of education sub-sector. It is not a gainsaying that allocation to education has been very low in Nigeria, compared to the 26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) recommended by UNESCO. More funds should thus be injected into education sector to enable it meets its demands such as payment of salaries and allowances, purchase of infrastructures, facilities, among others. Over the years, Education Trust Fund (ETF) (now TET Fund) has been supportive in the funding of education in

Nigeria, particularly through the construction of buildings for schools. Like Oliver Twist, more need to be done for schools in the area of infrastructures and facilities, to improve schools' environment. Government should however fortify the ETF so that more revenue could be generated for funding the UBE programme.

*Tackle Corruption in the Education System Decisively:* Corruption is an impediment to economic growth and development in Nigeria. It is a menace which has crept into all sectors of the economy including education. Unfortunately, funds for education programmes/activities in Nigeria are often diverted/misappropriated by some individuals. In the Nation of Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2008, it was reported that between 2005 and 2006, some States diverted the sum of N3.3 billion out of the N54.7 billion released for the development of primary education. In Nigeria presently, there is a belief that government's money is national cake. Every individual thus wishes to cut his/her share of the cake which is why the menace is spreading like 'harmattan fire' in spite of the attempts at curtailing it. Due to the effect of corruption on education development in Nigeria, Government should be very strict with the way it is handled. Even though there are agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) that tackle cases of corruption, many issues are at stake as far as the handling of corruption cases is concerned. To tackle this menace, government should read the riot act and ensure that those involved in the act of corruption are punished. The anti-corruption agencies should be empowered to deal decisively with corrupt cases discovered. They should also be allowed to be independent and autonomous. Regulations that can stem the tide or prevent corruption should be instituted. Workers in the country should also be paid living wages to discourage corruption in the public service. The immunity clause in the constitution of Nigeria, which prevents certain political office holders from prosecution while in office, should be cancelled. If education funds are spent on educational programmes/activities, there is every possibility that there will be appreciable progress towards achieving Education for All.

*Award Scholarships and Bursaries to Pupils/Students:* As much as poverty of parents/guardians is a major factor influencing wastage in Nigeria, government should award scholarships and bursaries to pupils and students of educational institutions, to ameliorate the effect of poverty of their parents/guardians.

*Re-introduce Education Loan for Pupils/Students:* Government should also re-introduce education loan for pupils/students to enable poor parents pay the fees and procure needed materials for their children.

*Provide Jobs for Graduates of Educational Institutions:* Government should provide jobs for outputs of educational institutions and grant loans with reduced interest to graduates that are willing to be self-employed, to curtail the rising trend in unemployment in the country.

*Recruit, Train and Motivate Teachers:* In view of the position of teachers in the successful implementation of this programme, more teachers should be recruited and posted to schools, to strengthen the existing stock. Teachers should also be motivated to encourage them towards improved performance. Provision of special allowance for those in the rural areas and difficult terrains, would be a step in the right direction. Government should also sponsor more teachers for seminars, conferences, and workshop, to improve their skills. Schools should not be established at the outskirts of town or city.

*Combat Poverty in the Country:* In Nigeria, majority of the citizens are ravaged by poverty. Official statistics show that in 1980, the national poverty incidence was 28.1% of the population, which increased to 65.6% in 1996, and 70% in 2000 (Obadan, 2010). The population that lived below \$1.25 a day from 2000 to 2007 was 64.4% (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2007). Human Poverty Index (HPI) of Nigeria was also found to be 114 in world rank (United Nations Human Development Report, 2009). The issue of poverty has been preventing many parents from enrolling their children in schools and sustaining those enrolled in schools. At present, many children of school-age can be found in the streets of Nigeria, as hawkers, motor-park touts, luggage carriers, 'area boys', shoe shiners, car washers, and scavengers, among others. The case of 'Almajiris' (i.e. street children) in the Northern part of the country depicts a country of wasted generation. Due to poverty of their parents, these children of school-age are left to roam the streets of cities in the North, begging for everything including food, money, and clothes.

*Provide Adequate Facilities and Infrastructures for Schools:* Reports (Nwadiani, 1999; Okebukola, 2002) indicate that educational institutions in Nigeria are characterized by inadequacy and decayed infrastructural facilities, in spite of her efforts to achieve education for all citizens in year 2015. The poor and unfriendly learning environment in Nigeria has thus not been encouraging adequate enrolment of children in schools while also encouraging dropping from schools. To combat this problem, government should ensure that more infrastructures and facilities are provided in schools.

*Provide Buses to Convey Pupils/Students to and from Schools:* Government should alleviate the suffering of pupils/students by donating buses to schools for the conveyance of

pupils/students to school and back to their homes daily.

*Reach out to International Charity Organisations for Assistance:* In view of the fact that it is becoming obvious that government cannot alone shoulder the burden of education funding, there is need for government to seek the assistance of international organizations such as World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, to increase their financial commitment to UBE programme and also ensure the programme's objectives.

*Increased Commitment of Schools' Administrators:* In view of the level of teachers' indiscipline in schools, schools' administrators should strive to promote discipline and curb teachers' excesses. Erring teachers should be disciplined to serve as deterrent to others.

#### *Introduce Poverty Eradication /Alleviation Measures*

In view of the level of poverty and the barrier it constitutes to enrolment in schools, there is need for government to eradicate to eradicate it completely or at worst, initiate poverty alleviation measures to cushion its effects on the citizenry. To this effect, government should provide micro credit loan for traders and businessmen/women so that they can increase the scope of their businesses and make more profit.

### Summary and Conclusion

The need to address the loopholes in the provision of basic education across the states in Nigeria and increase the access of the citizenry to it, in line with global crusade, compelled Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999. Since its inception however, issue of wastage (in terms of repetition and dropping out of schools by pupils/students) has been a major challenge undermining the achievement of its objectives. This paper examines the concept 'wastage', its causes and status in basic education provision in Nigeria. Objectives and rationale for introduction of the UBE programme, as well the scope, were also examined in the paper. The need to curtail this wastage menace at this period when efforts are geared towards achieving Education for All and Millennium Development goals cannot be overemphasized. It is thus hopeful that if the recommendations in this paper, such as orientation of parents/guardians, adequate funding of the programme, tackling of corruption in the country, particularly in the educational system decisively, award of scholarships and bursaries to pupils and students, re-introduction of Education Loan for pupils/students, provision of jobs for graduates of educational institutions, recruitment, training and motivation of Teachers, combating poverty in the country, among others, are

adopted and implemented, this feat will be achieved while the standard of education will improve from the *status quo* in Nigeria.

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