

EVALUATION OF TEACHER FACTOR IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the extent to which public primary schools comply with laid down guidelines for the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme (UBE) in Cross River State, Nigeria, and to find out the extent of compliance by schools. The survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of 287 public primary schools were used in the study. The stratified random sampling method was used in school selection. As an evaluation study, Template was used to collection data about pupils' attendance, and distribution of teachers according to teaching subject, educational qualification and subject of specialization, while simple percentages was used to summarize the data. Results indicated that: (a) complied substantially with the requisite educational qualification for the recruitment of teachers as 87 percent of the teachers possess the requisite teaching qualification. (b) Operated at low teacher-pupils ratio as 63 percent of the schools operated at 1:34 below the approved 1:35 teacher: pupil's ratio. (c) the number of specialist teachers per subject per schools particularly in subject areas like Mathematics, Primary science, Computer Science and local language were not adequate, Teachers were not assigned teaching job on the bases of their area of specialization. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that recruitment of teachers should be based on subject area of specialization particularly in subjects such as local language, creative art, computer science and mathematics. Areas for further research have been addressed.

Keywords: *Teacher-pupils ratio; Specialist subject teachers; Teacher factor; Implementation of Universal Basic Education*

Introduction

For over five decades now, Nigerian educational system has undergone intensive revision with the aim of making education more relevant and functional to its citizens. The first-step towards achieving mass access to education in Nigeria could be traced to 1955 and 1957 when the civilian government of Western and Eastern Regions of Nigeria respectively launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE). The Universal Primary Education recorded considerable success in the Western Region but a total

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failure in Eastern Region. These regional UPE programme created regional inequality in educational growth and development and the programme was short-lived because the regions discovered that the financial implications of the project was too enormous for them (Ajayi, 2007, Odu, 2007). Consequently, in September 1976, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched in Nigeria by the then Military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. The UPE was a six-year uninterrupted free primary education programme and a solution to the problems of regional educational programmes. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme led to increased children's access to education. However, it could not be sustained beyond 23 years as a result of problems associated with factors such as poor planning, inadequate facilities and inadequate numbers of teachers, financial constrain and lack of political will among others (Adepoju and Fabiyi, 2006).

The desire to correct the inadequacies of the UPE and provide functional and qualitative education for the citizenry reinforced the introduction, on 30th September 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria. This is part of the strategy aimed at ensuring universal education for children by the year 2015 (Research and Statistics Department, UBEC, 2002). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the nation's second attempt to introduce a scheme targeted at mass access to education. The Universal Basic Education programme was launched in response to global trend of providing "Education for All" (EFA) (Oga, 2002 :2). It is the type of education that can help an individual function effectively (Eddy & Akpan 2009).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) according to National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) shall be of nine-years duration comprising of six years of primary school education and three years of junior secondary education. It is suppose to be free and compulsory. The nine (fundamental) Years of UBE programme is further arranged into three levels, the junior primary level of first to third (1-3) year also known as lower basic education. The senior primary level of education of fourth – sixth year (middle basic education) and the Junior Secondary School level of seventh-ninth year (upper basic education). The major aim of the programme is to wipe out illiteracy and ensure the acquisition of functional skills (Odu, 2007). However, in order to avoid the inadequacies inherent in the UPE scheme and lay the foundation for the promotion of Nigerians philosophy of education based on: "(ii) the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen (ii) the full integration of the individual into the community; and (iii) the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary level both inside and outside the formal school system" (FRN,NPE,2004:7).

Primary education is the education given in institutions for children of six to 11 years plus of age. It is the foundation on which other levels of education rest. As contained in NPE (2004, section 4:18) the specific objectives of primary education are to:

- (i) Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively.
- (ii) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (iii) Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contributing to life of the society.
- (iv) Mould the character, and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- (v) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- (vi) Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limit of the child's capacity.
- (vii) Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trade and craft of the locality (p.14)

In pursuance of the above stated objectives, the following guidelines have been provided for the implementation of UBE programme at the six years primary Education level:

- (i) primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory.
- (ii) School library shall be provided.
- (iii) Specialist teachers of various subjects such as mathematics, science, agriculture, physical education, librarian, English language etc shall be provided.
- (iv) The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years.
- (v) For effective teaching and learning the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:35.
- (vi) For effective functioning in the modern world there is urgent need to integrate Information and Communication Technology into education in Nigeria, government shall therefore provide basic infrastructure and training for the realization of this goal at primary school level and
- (vii) The minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)" (FRN, NPE, 2004 : 15).

It is now about 15years since the UBE programme was launched. Igwe (2004) had noted that the problems that led to the failure of UPE programme launched in 1976 have still manifested themselves in the implementation of the UBE programme. The researcher, being himself a stakeholder in the UBE programme (being a teacher) is interested about its success thus was excited about knowing the implementation status of the programme in Cross River State where he is teaching. This is because implementation inadequacies have its consequences. These may include laying a weak foundation for scientific literacy and development of the mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the society. Above all, denial of the child the right to equal access to qualitative education for the development of a sound minded and effective citizenry to meet up with modern day challenges.

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In Cross River State, the government through the ministry of Education has been doing much to ensure that the UBE programme is effectively implemented. Among other thing the government has done was the recruitment of qualified teachers, building of classroom blocks and laboratories in all schools in the State. Textbooks are provided for pupils and the supervisory division of the Ministry of Education is being reinforced with additional personnel and means of transportation for maximum performance (UBEC, 2002). Furthermore, Teachers are motivated through regular payment of salaries and rural/science allowance. However, no effort has so far been made to assess whether the steps taken have resulted in effective implementation of the programme in the state.

This work was therefore an effort to help Cross River State Government know if the stakeholders are effectively implementing the UBE programme in the State. By evaluation of the UBE programme, one meant the assessment of the extent to which the laid down guidelines for the programme implementation are being complied with.

1.2 Research questions

To guide the appraisal of UBE programme implementation process, the following research questions were formulated.

1. What proportion of UBE teachers in Cross River State (i) have the requisite education teaching qualification? and (ii) are subject specialists?
2. What proportion of schools: (i) maintain the appropriate teacher-pupils ratio?

Methodology

Research design: The survey research design was adopted for this study. The basis of the use of the design is predicated on the fact that the present study is focused on understanding the status of Universal Basic Education Programme implementation at the time of the investigation.

Subjects: The subjects for the study consisted of 287 public primary schools from 12 Local Government Area in Cross River state (72 schools from the Southern, 97 from the Central, and 118 from the Northern Senatorial Districts). The stratified random sampling technique was used in sample selection. This was to ensure the use of sample that was representative of the study population. First the state was stratified based on senatorial districts. In all, the state has three Senatorial Districts. From each of the Senatorial District, four (4) local Government Areas were randomly selected for the study. This resulted in the selection of a total of 12 Local Government Area for the study. In each of the 12 selected Local Government Areas, the numbers of schools differs and for proportionate sample selection, 35 percent of the schools were randomly selected for the study as shown in Table 2.

Instrumentation: The instruments used in collecting data for this study was a template, titled, UBE programme implementation template. The template had two parts. Part A was used in recording information about school name, LGA and Senatorial Districts. Part B of the template had three sections. Section (one) was used in recording information in respect of numbers of pupils and teachers in schools, specific educational qualification. Section (two) of the template was used in recording data in respect to teacher`s subject area of specialization and classes assigned.

The research instrument was constructed by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor. The items included were adopted from section 4:19 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (FRN, NPE, 2004:15). The test-retest method of estimating instrument reliability was used for this study. To achieve this, a pilot test of 40 schools was twice carried out at interval of one week after the first test. The sample was randomly drawn from schools in the Northern Senatorial District not part of the main study. The reliability coefficient ranged from 0.71 to 0.80. *Procedure for data collection and analysis:* The researcher personally visited each of the schools sampled for the study. On arrival to the Schools, the purpose of the study was briefly explained and the cooperation and permission of each of the head teacher or the assistant was sorted, assuring them that the information as seen in the template would be used only for academic purposes. The researcher checked the individual records of teachers in terms of educational teaching qualification, the subject(s) area specialized and the classes assigned to teach. The pupil`s attendance registers were also checked and information on the number on roll recorded from class to class. The researcher observed the quality and quantity of library resources and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, the language type used as a medium of instruction and ticked accordingly. With this personal visitation accurate data was collected. Simple percentage analysis of the information collected was carried out and presented in a bar chart.

Results and Discussion

Research question one: What proportions of the UBE teachers are with the requisite teaching qualifications?

The data for this research question is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers with the requisite teaching qualification

Teaching qualification	N	Percent
TC II/SSCE	230	8
Diploma Certificate	144	4
Nigerian Certificate of Education(NCE)	1900	69
Degree	545	19

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The table 1 shows the total number of teachers and their respective educational qualification attained against Senatorial district. The results showed that 8percent of teachers are holders of S.S.C.E., and TCII, four percent (4%) are holders of Diploma Certificates, 69percent are holders of Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), and 19 percent of teachers who are degree holders. This suggests that 69 percent of teachers have exactly the minimum number of teachers with the requisite teaching qualification, while 19 percent of schools have above the minimum number of teachers with the requisite teaching qualification. This also implies that 88 percent have more the minimum and above number of teachers with the requisite teaching qualification. The data shows that 12 percent of Schools had teachers that are below the minimum NCE required to be UBE teacher.

Research question two: What proportion of schools in Cross River State maintains the appropriate teacher-pupils ratio? the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Teacher-pupils ratio in schools in Cross River State

Teacher/Pupil ratio	N	Percent
High 1:36 & above	39	14
Approved ratio	67	23
Low 1:34 & below	181	63

The result in Table 2 shows that 14 percent of the schools operate at high Teacher-pupils' ratio of 1:36 and above. The results also show that 23percent of schools complied with the

approved teacher-pupils ratio of 1:35. However, 63 percent of the schools operate at high Teacher-pupils' ratio of 1:36 and below.

Research question three: What proportion of UBE Teachers are non-subject specialists? the result is presented in Table 3.

Subjects	N	Present
English	240	9
Mathematics	53	2
Primary Science	497	18
Agric Science	258	9
Physical & Health Education	148	5
Social Studies	934	34
Computer Science	=	0
Creative Arts	=	0
Local Language	=	0

Table 3: Proportion of UBE Teachers that are non-subject specialists

Table 3 shows that a total of nine percent (9%) of the teachers are specialist of English language, two percent (2%) are specialist of Mathematics, 18 percent are specialist of primary science, nine percent (9%) are specialist of Agricultural science, five percent (5%) are specialist of Physical and Health Education (PHE), 34 percent are specialist of social studies and none of Creative Arts, Computer Science, and local Language. The percentage distributions of subject-specialist and non-subject specialist teachers are 76 percent 24 percent respectively.

Discussion of findings

Teaching qualification and implementation of education programmes

Finding from analysis of data on research question one on the proportion of teachers with the requisite teaching qualification in the implementation of UBE programme revealed that the recruitment of teachers based on requisite educational teaching qualification conform to the UBE implementation guidelines as a greater proportion of teachers possessed the requisite educational teaching qualification.

Collaborating the finding of this study Eddy and Akpan (2009) on the prospect of the implementation of UBE programmes in Akwa Ibom state, revealed that the quality of teachers teaching in primary and secondary schools in Akwa Ibom state are in conformity with UBE educational standard required of teachers. Some factors may have been responsible for the high numbers of teachers meeting minimum education qualification required by the UBE implementation guidelines. One factor may have been the existence of two Universities, University of Calabar and Cross River State university of Science and Technology, the establishment of two colleges of education; Federal College of Education Obudu and College of Education, Akamkpa. All running Educational courses and programmes aimed at enhancing educational qualification of teachers. Another factor may be the opportunity granted teachers by the Cross River State government to attend NCE and degree sandwich programmes that also enhance their educational qualification during holidays.

The findings of this study also showed that there are more NCE than degree holder in the service of Cross River State Universal Basic Education commission. In line with the finding of this study, Peter (2007) in his study of capacity building in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) indicated that the programme had more junior staff than senior staff. The result is also collaborated by Ekpo (2002), who reported that the staffing condition of higher institution is characterized by having more junior staff than senior staff. The finding of this study showed that a very low proportion of teachers (13%) teachers are not qualified to be teachers because they had below NCE. The result of this study supports the findings of Ejikeme (1995) in his study of the effect of teacher's qualification on effective implementation of assessment scheme in

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science practical, which revealed that the problems of poor assessment of practical science students generally start with the existence of teachers that were less qualified. He observed that the use of SSCE, TCII and Diploma holders as teacher without basic educational qualification and training in teaching should be discouraged. From this discussion, it is logical to state that there are still some grey areas that must be addressed with respect to provision of adequate and qualified teachers in the implementation of UBE programme in Cross River State.

Findings of the study showed that schools in the Southern, Central and Northern senatorial Districts do not differ in the proportion of teachers with requisite teaching qualification. The high proportion of teachers with the requisite teaching qualification may be attributed to the nearness of University of Calabar, Cross River State University Of science And Technology (CRUTECH) and College of Education Akamkpa and Obudu that are all situated at vantage position for in-service studies in educational programmes in the state.

Subject specialist teachers and implementation of Educational Programmes

The results of analysis of proportion of non-subject specialist teachers revealed that, Schools in Cross River State do not comply with the directives on the provision and assignment of teaching responsibilities to teachers based on subject area specialized in the implementation of UBE programme. The study shows that a very low proportion of teachers (24%) are non-subject specialist teachers and that teachers teach every subject in the class assigned irrespective of subject area of specialization. This result is supported by Sonibare (2000), who observed that most educational institutions were grossly deficient of qualified and experienced teachers and students in such schools suffer greatly, working on menial technical project which the supervisors had only superficial know-how and where the staff were available, they were ineptly trained. The findings also collaborate those of Ajayi (2007), who revealed that there was gross shortage of subject specialist teachers in primary and secondary schools. The deficiency and lopsided required number of subject specialist teachers per subject per schools may be attributed to reckless manner in which teachers are being considered for recruitment by government without consideration to the educational implication of the guideline backing the implementation of UBE programme.

The study generally revealed low availability of specialist teachers for English language and mathematics with local languages, computer science and creative art worst hit in all Senatorial Districts. In the same vein UBEB (2002) Igwe (2004) and Obanya (2006) identified inadequate number of subject specialist to be an obstacle to effective implementation of UBE programme in Nigeria

Teacher-pupils ratios and implementation of educational programmes

Findings on the proportion of Schools that implement the approved teacher-pupils ratio indicated that 181(63percent) of the schools operate at low teacher-pupils ratio of

1:34 and below. This implies a low pupils –teacher ratio below the 1:35 stipulated (NPE, 2004), UBE implementation guide line on teacher-pupils ratio. The findings of this study is highly at variance with the findings of Bategeka and Ukurut (2006) which indicated that in Ghana the teacher-pupil ratio stood at 1:65 in 2000 and 1:53 in 2003 against the projected 1:40 after the introduction of UPE programme in Ghana. Also in contrast with findings of this study is the submission of Eddy and Akpan (2006) that primary and secondary schools in Akwa Ibom are excessively populated especially in government own schools due to the introduction of the free UBE programme. The low teacher: Pupil's ratio means low enrolment of pupils in UBE Schools. This could also be associated with multiple fees and levies paid by public schools.

The findings of this study also indicated that 14 percent of the schools operate at high teacher-pupils ratio of 1:36 and above, and this high pupil-teachers ratio seems to be higher in the Central than the Southern and highest in the Northern Senatorial district than Central and Southern Senatorial Districts put together. Confirming the finding of this study, Elechi (2011) observed that private schools in urban centers have special rooms for various specialized subjects and this is why student in private schools are highly populated and have greater learning opportunities than public schools. This could be attributed to urbanization trend and its attendance growth in number of private schools which might be absorbing most of the pupils from public schools.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Base on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the implementation of Universal Basic Education programme (UBEP) in Cross State primary schools was not in line with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education UBE implementation guidelines. There were no specialist teachers in some core subjects. More so, the specialist teachers available are made to teach all subjects irrespective of the subjects specialized. The implementation of the UBE programme is characterized by low qualified teachers as a medium of instruction, low pupils: teacher ratio, finally, the study concluded that Cross River State UBE programme implementation needed a general review, particularly in the allocation of human and material input.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for UBE policy makers/planners, administrators of UBE programme, Government agency and researchers. There is the necessity for the recruitment of only science teachers with relevant competencies in teaching primary sciences, mathematics, computer as well as local languages and creative art. The use of secondary school leavers (SSCE), TCII and Diploma holders without the basic training and qualification for teaching should be discouraged. There should be a policy and legislation making it compulsory for all teachers of UBE schools to teach only the subject(s) they specialized in.

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