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## A Critical Analysis of UPE and UBE Policy

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**AKPAN, E. Ebenezer, *Ph.D, FCICN, AP, PPGDCA, PHDCDPM***  
**Corporate Institute of Research and Computer Science**  
**140 Ikot Ekpene Road**  
**Uyo, Akwa Ibom State**

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### ABSTRACT

*The study sought to critical analyze the UPE and UBE policy. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a goal stated in many national development plans and pursued with vigour by governments of most developing countries. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria was introduced in 1999 to improve the educational system in the country. The policy was aimed at primary education and junior secondary schools which are the foundations of education worldwide. The article reviewed the objectives and challenges of implementation of UPE/UBE Policies. The study concluded that if UPE and UBE policies are properly implemented, it will help in building sustainability safeguards into its on-going effort to bring basic education to all and, through education, contribute to the attainment of the MDG goals. One of the recommendations was that, for effective, management, and implementation of the UPE/UBE, there is need of full participation and cooperation from the public, professionals, and the government.*

**KEYWORDS: UPE, UBE and Policy Analysis**

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### Introduction

In an attempt to rehabilitate the educational system and the quest for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) as part of the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in Nigeria, the Federal Government launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Sokoto, Sokoto State on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1999. The launching against the strides militating against improving educational developments in Nigeria (Ogunsanmi and Ibimiluyi, 2014). It aims at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty, as well as stimulating and accelerating national development, political consciousness and national integration. The UBE was preceded by a very similar educational programme, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) with the major aims similar to that of the UBE at providing basic educational skills for children and all citizens to be useful citizen in their communities, country and the world at large. Every child, from the age of six was encourage to attend school and remain there for the next six years. UPE was also free and funded by both the Federal and State governments. Both programmes are in line with the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), which stipulates that a child should receive primary education between the ages of six and eleven, to gain fundamental skills, knowledge, feelings, thoughts and actions. The Primary education, according to the National Policy on Education is geared towards necessary and wholesome development of the Nigerian children, regardless of the Nigerian educational system (FGN, 2004).

### **Concept of UPE Policy**

Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy in the form of fee abolition has become popular in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) for achieving Education for All (EFA) since the mid- 1990s (Avenstrup, Xiaoyan and Soren, 2004). Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a goal stated in many national development plans and pursued with vigour by governments of most developing countries (Nishimura and Byamugisha, 2011). Though the purpose and aims for universal primary education are many and varied, they can be generally categorized into three, namely: human rights, equity, and socio-economic development (Mikiko and Keiichi 2008). Primary Education is seen as the first step in laying the foundation for future educational opportunities and lifelong skills. Through the skills and knowledge imbued, primary education enables people to participate in the social, economic and political activities of their communities to their fullest potential. It is also seen as a basic human right that frees human beings from a state of ignorance and helps to reduce the negative effects of poverty, relating in particular to health and nutrition (UNESCO 2008).

The main objectives of Universal Primary Education are as follows;

- (1) To establish, provide and maintain quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resources development;
- (2) Transforming society in a fundamental and positive way;
- (3) Providing the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and complete the whole Primary Cycle
- (4) Making basic education accessible to the learner and relevant to his/her needs so as to meet national goals;
- (5) Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
- (6) Meeting the objective of poverty eradication illiteracy while equipping every individual with the basic skills and knowledge with which to exploit the environment for both self and national development (MoES 1999).

Looking at the above objectives, one can say that UPE meets all the criteria of equality of access, survival, output and outcome. Despite its recent rapid expansion, UPE policy has a long history. Existing literatures indicate that previous attempts to achieve UPE in developing countries faced problems in its supply- driven policies, unclear mechanisms, and low quality of education (Sifuna, 2007). The past experiences in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya also show that UPE policy implementation was prone to be affected by economic crisis.

### **Concept of UBE Policy**

The UBE programme is an education policy formulated to represent Nigeria government strategy for achieving Education for All (EFA). Okoro (2010) described UBE programme as an expression of the strong desire of the government to eliminate illiteracy by raising the level of awareness and general education opportunities of the entire citizenry in Nigeria. The vision of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is that at the end of 9 years of continuous education, every

child should have acquired appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable in order to contribute his/her quota to national development. The launching in September 1999 of the Universal Basic Education Programme constitutes a rebirth by President Olusegun Obasanjo who had earlier introduced similar program in 1977. The principal objectives of the program were:

- (1) Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (2) The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age
- (3) Reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency);
- (4) Cater for the learning needs of young persons, who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- (5) Ensure the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying solid foundation for life-long learning.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the objectives of the programme has been well articulated and if well implemented, will make Nigeria to compete favourably in terms of development. One of the outstanding elements of the 1999 basic education policy is: its compulsory provision in response to the urgent demands of the age of globalization (Yamma and Izom, 2018). It was introduced to satisfy Nigeria's commitments to basic education for its people and to fulfill the country's obligations as a member of the global community as well as signatory to several declarations on education.

***The Main Beneficiaries of the Programme are:***

- a) Children aged 3-5 years, for Early Child Care and Development (ECCDE);
- b) Children aged 6-11 plus years for primary school education; and
- c) Children aged 12-14 plus years for Junior Secondary School Education.

***The Scope of UBE includes the following:***

- a) Programmes and initiatives for ECCDE;
- b) Programmes and initiatives for acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life-skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above);
- c) Out- of school, non-formal programmes for the updating of knowledge and skills for persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for lifelong learning;
- d) Special programmes of encouragement to ALL marginalized groups: girls and women, nomadic populations out of school youth;

- e) Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths, who have not had the benefit of formal education; and
- d) The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the junior secondary school (UNESCO, 2015).

From the various objectives of UBE stated above, the child should have a continuous, uninterrupted stretch of education for 6 years from primary school to the third year of the junior secondary school. Apart from this, the UBE scheme plans catering for the adults, who have been out of school before they acquired the basic skills needed for life-long learning in form of non-formal programmes. So, the UBE programme is planned in such a way that it shall provide non-formal skills and training for youths who have not had the benefit of formal education (Dare et. al., 2008)

**Comparison between UPE and UBE Policies**

S/N	Universal Primary Education (UPE)	Universal Basic Education (UBE)
(1)	To establish, provide and maintain quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resources development	Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
(2)	Transforming society in a fundamental and positive way	The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age
(3)	Providing the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and complete the whole Primary Cycle	Reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency)
(4)	Making basic education accessible to the learner and relevant to his/her needs so as to meet national goals	Cater for the learning needs of young persons, who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education
(5)	Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities	Ensure the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying solid foundation for life-long learning
(6)	Meeting the objective of poverty eradication illiteracy while equipping every individual with the basic skills and	

	knowledge with which to exploit the environment for both self and national development	
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**Similarity between UPE and UBE Policies**

A 2005 study of Anglophone African countries identified the following enabling factors to explain the relatively fast move of a number of African countries towards the attainment of EFA goals (Obanya, 2005):

- (1) Political stability: a pre-condition for everything else;
- (2) Long-term strategic planning: UPE/EFA as an integral part of an over-arching national vision;
- (3) Developing UPE/EFA in a systemic context: along with the post-primary 0sector of education;
- (4) Paying special attention to the out-of-school population: thus the need to carry UPE/EFA along with non-formal basic education and literacy;
- (5) Adopting an inclusive approach: access, equity, relevance, quality and efficiency promoted from the very beginning;
- (6) Strong civil society involvement;
- (7) Broad growth strategy: expansion of educational opportunities along with expansion of other socio-economic services;
- (8) Building national capacity for planning and execution.

These point echo what was said in the early days of promoting UBE in Nigeria (Obanya, 2006). The sustainability path for UPE/UBE in Nigeria must lie in the country genuinely taking steps to avoid the mistakes of the past and drawing on the experience of its own UPE/UBE history. Borrowing from the promising experience of the African top scorers on the EFA league table (EFA Monitoring Reports) would be one way of building sustainability safeguards into its on-going effort to bring basic education to all and, through education, contribute to the attainment of the MDG goals (Obanya and Binns, 2009).

**Challenges of UPE Policy**

The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) nationwide in 1976 experienced problems of under-estimation of about 30 percent of the turn-up number of the children enrolment, acute shortage of classroom spaces, shortage of teachers and equipment. This has indicated that primary school education is under-funded; most of the primary sections controlled and financed by the government are in shamble (Akinbote, 2000). Denga (2000) noted that universal access to education has been the prime target for Nigeria, since the middle of the 1970s when the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) scheme blasted off. This led to sharp increase in

enrolment from 6.2 million in the 1975/76 session to 14.8 million in 1992. This sharp increase in enrolment without adequate planning created a lot of problems such as: insufficient funds from the government for the required expansion of schools, scarcity of trained and qualified teachers and the political instability in the country, rendered the UPE programme unsustainable as noted by Achuonye (2004), Nwachukwu (2007) and Nwanekezi and Onyekuru (2012). The overwhelming and unanticipated results of this sudden educational expansion consequent upon the UPE scheme evidenced a profound shortage of learning facilities including space, a severe dearth of teachers and funds to implement the system. Complaints started to be heard from parents and the general public because of the cost imposed on them from a programme that was purported to educate their children free of charge.

***Inaccurate Data for Planning:*** Inaccurate data for educational planning can constitute a threat to the envisaged benefit of UPE. Nigeria's literacy rate is estimated at 52% of the population and about 21 million children were of school going age as at year 2000. The disturbing scenario arising out of the quoted statistical information above is quite daunting in Nigeria. The problems of statistics for planning are associated with a number of factors (Umana, 2018).

***Inadequate Funding:*** This is another envisaged problem of effective implementation of UPE program in Nigeria. Inadequate funding which crippled effective implementation of UPE and the 6-3-3-4 system of education affects the implementation of the UPE program.

***Inadequate Supply of Facilities and Equipment:*** Most of the existing structures are fast decaying, dilapidated and in a state of disrepair and most of school libraries and laboratories are ill equipped. Furthermore, other educational related materials such as tables and chairs are either damaged or in short supply.

***Inadequate Supply of Component Teachers:*** The UPE Implementation Committee (2000) estimated that about 1.2 million pupils will be registered for the scheme at a ratio of 1:40. This means that additional teachers will be required to cater for the number of registered students. By implication of this enrollment figures, about 84,270 trained teachers will be required to effectively cater for the number of registered children.

***Problem in Achieving UPE Objective:*** Implication of the UPE objectives is likely to suffer a great set-back due to the huge financial demands involved. UPE scheme is capital intensive and unless the Federal Government is financially committed to the project, implementation might be ineffective. This aspect can be rendered ineffective in view of poor communication system and shortage of trained personnel.

***Poor Monitoring and Evaluation System:*** Quality control is a must in the design and implementation process. Monitoring and evaluation of UPE program ought to be a normal practice of Ministries of Education and should be carried out in a highly professional manner. Ironically, the monitoring and evaluation system under the UPE program was very ineffective. This ineffectiveness is capable of thwarting effective implementation of UPE program objectives in Nigeria (Umana, 2018).

### **Barriers to Survival in the Practice of UPE**

***Costs on UPE education:*** Despite the fact that the implementation of UPE came with the abolition of school fees and PTA charges, many children still fail to access school while others

dropout because of the hidden costs borne by parents (Atekyereza, 2001). The 2005/2006 Uganda National Household Survey found that 8% of households hardly had a meal a day due to poverty. At this rate, it is obvious that such family would rather spend little income they have on food rather than meeting hidden costs of education and especially the uniform which is compulsory. In cases where parent have a problem in meeting these costs, children are sent away from school until they get such money. To some extent, this causes some children to drop out of school while those who manage to go through to primary seven are likely to perform poorly due to time wasted and humiliation faced as they are always depicted as poor and unable to meet these costs (Galimaka, 2008).

**Infrastructures:** Infrastructures include classrooms, latrines/toilets, water facilities as well as the school location. Although the Governments owns the largest number of primary schools (about 80%), due to declining budgetary resources allocated to education sector, the infrastructures have remained inadequate making it difficult to guarantee equality of education access to all as well as ensuring completion rate to those who enroll (Juuko & Kabonesa 2007). Shortage of infrastructures and competencies to cope with large numbers of pupil is a challenge in the implementation of UPE.

**Quality of education:** Under UPE, good quality of education is reflected on pupils' ability to read, write and speak English (MFPED, 2002). In order to improve the quality of primary education, the government has devoted some resources to procure some textbooks and construct some classrooms. The increase in education inputs explains the gradual improvement of some education quality indicators from the time UPE was introduced.

**Instructional materials:** Instructional materials include textbooks, teachers' guides, blackboards, chalk and other class facilities that are necessary to ensure good quality education. Although the Government seems to have purchased a large number of textbooks as part of UPE implementation strategy, accessing them is limited to few schools which are well equipped.

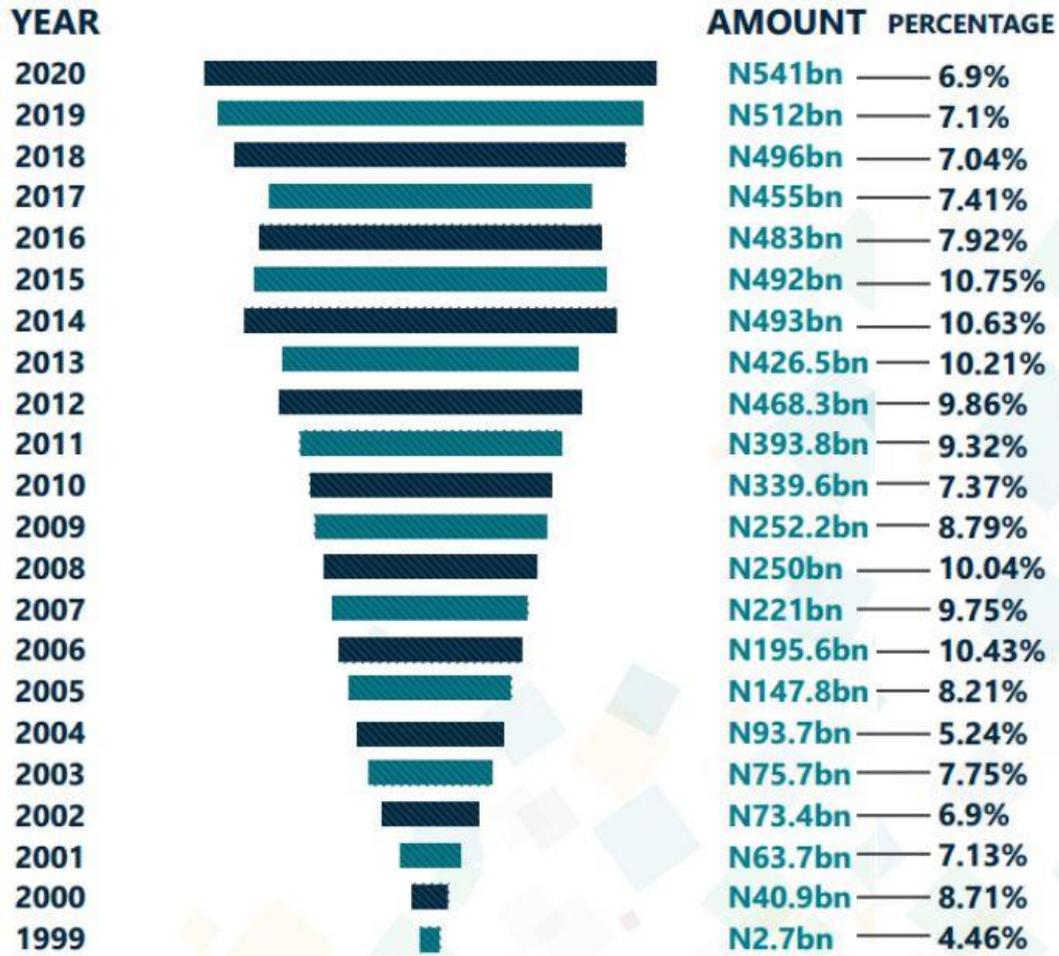
**Disabled children:** One of the paramount motives in implementing UPE in Nigeria was to make primary education accessible to all and children with disabilities were encouraged to join the mainstream schools. Though this looks a good entry point to the disabled in accessing education and especially to those who had been stigmatized before UPE, it appears that special arrangements for these children are missing (Galimaka, 2008).

### **Challenges of UBE Policy**

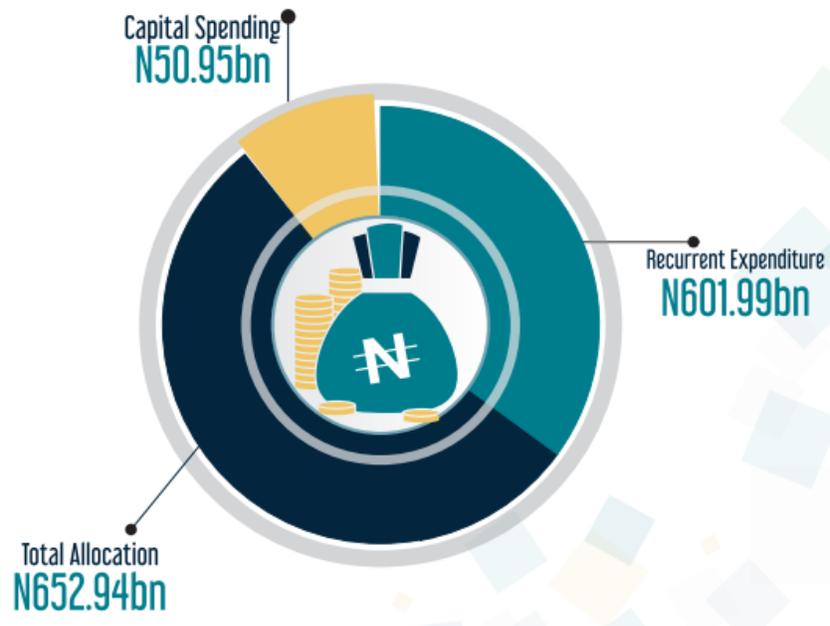
Although, the Universal Basic Education Scheme started on paper in 1999, it did not take off at the same time in various states of the Federation. The implication of this is that its full assessment may be too early, considering the time it actually took off at the state level. However, as young as the scheme was some of the challenges faced both at the Federal and State levels were obvious (Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009). Despite the adoption of the UBE, several researchers (Madugu, 2000; Adebola, 2007 and Ejere, 2011) have observed that many years after the policy was launched, it is still poorly implemented. They also identified various factors that may have contributed to the failure of the implementation of UBE. These factors include *inter alia* inadequate and poor data; inadequacy of policy resources; fragmentation and conflict of roles or responsibilities due to many agencies involved in the implementation; and a dearth of high quality personnel in the implementing agencies at the state and local government level.

Other factors affecting the implementation and performance of UBE in Nigeria are social, economic and political factors. The world over, ability to allocate enough funds for a programme remains the greatest challenge that a programme can have. This is also, the case with the funding of the UBE in Nigeria. Between 1999 and 2009, the central government has spent more than N1.12 trillion on the education sector alone, with little to show for such a huge expenditure (Olanrewaju and Folorunso, 2009).

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION TO EDUCATION SECTOR (1999-2020)**



## TOTAL EDUCATION ALLOCATION BREAKDOWN



Source: Eduplana, 2020

***Inaccurate Data for Planning:*** Inaccurate data for educational planning can constitute a threat to the envisaged benefit of UBE. Nigeria's literacy, according to Baikie (2000) literacy rate is estimated at 52% of the population and about 21 million children were of school going age as at year 2000. For example, the national populations' census which is expected to provide the most reliable data for educational planning and implementation has always been politicised. Therefore, more often than not educational planning in Nigeria has been based on projected statistical data is often inaccurate for educational planning.

***Inadequate Funding:*** Inadequate funding was a major factor which affected the effective implementation of U.P.E and the 6-3-3-4 systems of education. This is likely to affect the realization of U.B.E objectives. According to UBE Programme Planning and Implementation Document (2000), a total of 500 million dollars was estimated for renovating the existing school structure in the whole country. This estimated amount does not include the cost of building new classroom structures. The fact of matter is that it may be difficult if not impossible for the government to allocate such huge amount of money to education.

***Inadequate Supply of Facilities and Equipment:*** This is another envisaged problem of effective implementation of UBE programme. According to Baikie (2000), most existing structures are dilapidated and in the state of disrepair. This further leads to the problem of inadequate teaching materials due to over enrolment. Also, the cost of providing essential educational facilities is about 300 million US dollars.

***UBE Programme and National Development:*** Nations of the world have now recognized and accepted education as powerful instrument of national development. In view of this, investment

in education and training has also been recognized as one of the key conditions for a competitive and cohesive society and national development. National development as viewed by Harbinson and Myers cited in Omotayo (2011) is the socio- economic and political advancement attained by a particular country within a given period of time, measurable against an acceptable global standard. The UBE programme if properly implemented will foster and facilitate national development in the socio-economic and political realms of Nigeria.

**Economic Development:** Economic development suggests that developing nations realize short cuts to industrialization and national development by the wide spread provision of education which is capable of raising the level of scientific knowledge which is an essential factor in economic development. Economic development as it relates to the UBE programme is reflected in the growing recognition that investment in both formal and informal education and training which will provide enhanced skills, knowledge, attitudes and motivation necessary for socio-economic development. Therefore, the UBE scheme if properly implemented will contribute directly to the growth of national income by improving the skills and productive capacity of the labour force.

**Social Development:** The UBE programme if properly implemented is expected to play the function of socialization and integration of the entire population. Again, the curriculum content of the UBE is expected to inculcate in the learners the appropriate values and attitudes that will foster social goals of living together and working together for national development. UBE is also expected to prepare the youths to play dynamic and constructive parts in the development of a society for the future progress which is measured in terms of human wellbeing.

**Political Development:** The political culture of Nigeria is still unrefined, although there has been tremendous improvement as from the second republic. In a country like Nigeria with socio-economic and political differences, it may be difficult to find general agreement on the set of values which can help solve some of the pressing political problems. For instance, the political system of Nigeria is subject to severe strains emanating from fears of tribalism, mistrust, suspicion, insecurity, victimization and prejudices. Therefore, if UBE programme properly installed will help to eradicate such problems and help to inculcate values such as tolerance, fair play, social justice, integrity in public and private life and a strong condemnation of political violence (Omotayo, 2011).

### **The Public Impact**

Although there has been some improvement to education in Nigeria since the beginning of the programme, it has been marginal considering its span of almost two decades.

- 1) As at 2015, Nigeria was ranked 103 out of 118 countries in UNESCO's Education For All (EFA) Development index which takes into account universal primary education and gender parity;
- 2) UNESCO 2015 review of education in Nigeria found that enrolment at primary and junior secondary levels had greatly increased since 2000. However, transition and completion rates remained below 70%;

- 3) Enrolment rates increased by 130% for secondary education in the period from 2000 to 2013 (based on the latest available statistics from the World Bank but decreased by 4% for primary level;
- 4) The quantity of the national school curriculum is undermined by the generally low quality of teachers who implement it which translates into low levels of learning achievement;
- 5) Infrastructure, toilets and furniture are inadequate and in a dilapidated state;
- 6) The system of collecting comprehensive, relevant data for planning is weak;
- 7) There are social and cultural barrier that are hindering female participation and
- 8) There is a lack of enforcement of the UBE Act 2004 on enrolment and retention (UNESCO, 2015).

### **Guidance and Counselling services in schools in relation to the UBE programme**

**Information Service:** This is an aspect of guidance and counselling practices in schools which provides useable educational, occupational, personal and social information. Such information helps clients to make the most appropriate choice and at the most appropriate time. Akinade et al. cited in Ogunsanmi and Ibimiluyi (2014) affirmed that this service is the totality of data gathering that are presented to the clients to facilitate awareness, knowledge, appraisal, decision-making and evaluation.

**Counselling Service:** This service is often regarded as the core or the backbone of any guidance service in schools. Counselling is concerned with creating opportunities and suitable environments for the personal, social, educational and vocational growth of the individual (Owuamanam, 2007). Counselling services help individuals learn to maximize benefits of living and to be exposed to their affective domain to maximize the gains of cognitive and psychomotor domains.

**Consultation Service:** Consultation service involves consultation within and outside the school system. Parents of children could consult with the school counsellor on rules and other aspects of the school and on particular areas that relate to their children's school or life behaviours.

**Orientation Service:** This service generally aims at introducing and orientating pupils, students and teachers to guidance services and adjustment to specific new environment. It is geared towards stimulating, motivating and arousing the interest of individuals. It helps the individual to feel emotionally and mentally secure in his or her environment.

### **Conclusion**

The study reviewed the policy analysis of UPE and UBE implementation with their objectives and attempt of various Nigeria governments to provide basic education for its citizens in the context of the challenges faced by the government on the implementation of the policies. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a goal stated in many national development plans and pursued with vigour by governments of most developing countries. Primary Education is seen as the first step in laying the foundation for future educational opportunities and lifelong skills. It is

also seen as a basic human right that frees human beings from a state of ignorance and helps to reduce the negative effects of poverty, relating in particular to health and nutrition. Various challenges of UPE and UBE policy such as: inaccurate data for planning, inadequate funding, inadequate supply of facilities and equipment, economic development, political development etc. were highlighted. The study also revealed that if UPE and UBE policies are properly implemented, it will help in building sustainability safeguards into its on-going effort to bring basic education to all and, through education, contribute to the attainment of the MDG goals.

### **Recommendations**

1. For effective, management, and implementation of the UPE/UBE, there is need of full participation and cooperation from the public, professionals, and the government.
2. The government system should be open to ideas and allow the free role and participation of educational specialists.
3. The government should stop the political practices of nominating key leaders into the educational position. Proper screening should be encouraged to nominate key leaders into the system.
4. More funds should not just be made available, but adequate accountability and transparency should be given more consideration on the part of the government, agencies, and other key officials involved in the system. The budget allocated to education should be properly considered before implemented.
5. Federal, State and Local Governments should provide incentives to pupils at primary schools, especially giving the free feeding which will encourage them to go to school. At junior and senior secondary schools, descent infrastructures, good toilet system, health clinics and transportation should be provided to enable them study under conducive environment.

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