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ASSESSING THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN SHAPING UBE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Several works have been written on different aspects of UBE policy and its implementation with little attention paid to the assessing the role of stakeholders in shaping the phenomenon. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is one of the most significant educational reforms introduced by the Nigerian government to ensure access to free, compulsory, and universal basic education for all children of school age. The policy, formally launched in 1999 and strengthened through the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, was designed to address persistent challenges such as low literacy rates, poor access to schooling, regional disparities, and high numbers of out-of-school children. This study assesses the role played by these stakeholders in shaping the development and implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria. The research work seeks to strengthen the knowledge of readers by adopting a sociological and interactive models of enquiry on the subject matter. The work discovered that effective stakeholder participation is critical for ensuring the sustainability, inclusiveness, and quality of basic education across the country. The study also identifies major challenges confronting the policy, such as inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, weak institutional coordination, and socio-cultural barriers to school enrollment. It suggests that stronger partnerships among government agencies, school management bodies, communities, and international development organizations can enhance accountability, improve resource mobilization, and strengthen educational outcomes. The research concludes that although the UBE policy has made significant progress in expanding access to education, its long-term success depends on continuous collaboration among stakeholders and sustained commitment to policy reforms that address emerging educational challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: Stakeholders, UBE policy, Development, Implementation, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a powerful instrument for national development. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, basic education plays a critical role in reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing economic productivity. Basic education equips individuals with foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for participation in social, political, and economic activities. However, prior to the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, Nigeria faced numerous challenges in ensuring equitable access to basic education. The Universal Basic Education programme was introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999 as part of efforts to improve access to quality education and address the alarming rate of illiteracy in the country. The programme was later strengthened through the enactment of the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, which made nine years of education, covering primary and junior secondary school, free and compulsory for all Nigerian children. The Act also established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to coordinate the implementation of the programme across the country.

The UBE programme was designed to achieve several objectives, including ensuring universal access to basic education, reducing dropout rates, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and promoting equitable educational opportunities across different regions and socio-economic groups. The programme also includes initiatives such as adult literacy education, nomadic education, and non-formal education programmes aimed at reaching marginalized populations. One of the distinctive features of the UBE programme is its collaborative approach, which requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders at different levels of governance and society. These stakeholders include the federal government, state governments, local government education authorities, school administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, and international development partners. The programme operates through a partnership framework where the federal government provides funding and policy direction while state and local governments are responsible for implementation and management of schools.

Stakeholder participation is essential in educational policy development and implementation because education systems are complex and require contributions from different actors with diverse expertise and responsibilities. Government agencies play a major role in policy formulation, funding, and regulation, while teachers and school administrators are responsible for translating policies into classroom practices. Parents and community members contribute through school management committees and community support for educational programmes. Civil society organizations and development partners also play important roles by providing technical support, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives. In Nigeria, stakeholder engagement has been recognized as a critical factor in the success of the UBE programme. Various mechanisms have been introduced to encourage participation and collaboration among stakeholders. For example, School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) help to strengthen community involvement in school governance and ensure accountability in the use of educational resources. Stakeholders are also expected to participate in monitoring the implementation of projects and ensuring that funds allocated for basic education are used effectively.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of the UBE policy continues to face several challenges, including inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and weak coordination among stakeholders. Research has shown that effective policy implementation in the education sector requires adequate teacher training, improved school facilities, and strong institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation. Given the importance of stakeholder participation in educational policy development and execution, it becomes necessary to examine how these actors influence the design, implementation, and outcomes of the UBE programme in Nigeria. Understanding the roles and contributions of stakeholders will provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the policy and help identify strategies for improving its effectiveness. This study therefore assesses the role of stakeholders in shaping the development and execution of the Universal Basic Education policy in Nigeria. The research examines the conceptual and theoretical foundations of stakeholder participation, reviews empirical studies on the implementation of the UBE programme, and explores the challenges and opportunities associated with stakeholder involvement in basic education policy development and implementation.

Conceptual Analysis

Conceptual analysis is essential in research because it clarifies the key concepts that form the foundation of the study. In examining the role of stakeholders in shaping the development and execution of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in Nigeria, it is important to analyze the major concepts embedded in the study. These include stakeholders, educational policy development, policy execution (implementation), and Universal Basic Education (UBE). Understanding these concepts provides a clearer framework for evaluating how different actors influence the formulation and implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

Concept of Stakeholders

The term stakeholder refers to individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest in, influence over, or are affected by a particular policy, project, or organization. In the context of education, stakeholders are those who participate in or influence the educational process either directly or indirectly. These include government authorities, teachers, school administrators, parents, students, community leaders, civil society organizations, and international development partners. According to educational policy scholars, stakeholders play a vital role in ensuring that educational policies are effectively formulated and implemented. Their involvement promotes inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and collective responsibility in the education system. In Nigeria's basic education sector, stakeholders contribute to decision-making processes, resource mobilization, monitoring of educational programmes, and provision of support for schools.

Stakeholders in the UBE programme operate at different levels. At the national level, the Federal Government through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) provides policy guidelines, funding support, and overall coordination of the programme. At the state level, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) are responsible for implementing the programme within their respective states. At the local level, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) oversee the day-to-day management of schools and ensure compliance with national policy objectives. In addition to government institutions, non-governmental stakeholders such as parents, community members, non-

governmental organizations (NGOs), and development agencies also contribute significantly to the success of the UBE programme. These groups often provide financial support, community mobilization, advocacy for school enrollment, and monitoring of educational projects. Their participation helps strengthen accountability and improves the quality of educational service delivery.

Concept of Educational Policy Development

Educational policy development refers to the systematic process through which educational goals, priorities, strategies, and guidelines are formulated to guide the operation and improvement of the education system. Educational policies are usually developed to address societal needs, improve access to education, enhance educational quality, and promote national development. Policy development in education typically involves several stages, including problem identification, policy formulation, consultation with stakeholders, policy approval, and the establishment of mechanisms for implementation and evaluation. In Nigeria, educational policy development is often influenced by national development priorities, international commitments, and socio-economic challenges.

Stakeholder participation is a crucial aspect of educational policy development. When stakeholders are actively involved in policy formulation, the resulting policies are more likely to reflect the needs and realities of the communities they serve. Participation also increases policy acceptance and reduces resistance during implementation. In the case of the Universal Basic Education programme, the policy was developed as a response to the challenges associated with Nigeria's earlier Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme introduced in 1976. The UBE policy sought to expand the scope of basic education by integrating early childhood education, primary education, and junior secondary education into a single framework aimed at achieving universal access to basic education.

Concept of Policy Implementation

Policy implementation, often referred to as policy execution, is the process through which policies are translated into concrete actions and programmes. It involves putting policy decisions into practice through the allocation of resources, establishment of institutions, development of programmes, and coordination of activities required to achieve policy objectives. Effective policy execution requires collaboration among various stakeholders responsible for carrying out specific roles within the education system. Government agencies are responsible for providing funding, establishing regulatory frameworks, and ensuring compliance with national standards. School administrators and teachers implement policies at the institutional level by delivering educational services and managing school operations.

Policy implementation is often considered one of the most challenging aspects of the policy process because it involves translating policy intentions into measurable outcomes. Even well-designed policies may fail if there are weaknesses in implementation mechanisms such as inadequate funding, poor coordination among stakeholders, lack of skilled personnel, or weak monitoring systems. In the context of the UBE programme, policy implementation involves several activities such as teacher recruitment and training, construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure, provision of instructional materials, monitoring of school attendance, and community engagement initiatives aimed at increasing enrollment and reducing dropout rates.

Concept of Universal Basic Education (UBE)

Universal Basic Education refers to a comprehensive educational programme designed to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education for all children of school age. In Nigeria, the UBE programme covers nine years of continuous schooling, including six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The UBE programme was introduced in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as part of efforts to achieve universal access to education and improve literacy levels across the country. The programme was later strengthened through the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, which established a legal framework for its implementation and created the Universal Basic Education Commission to coordinate the programme at the national level. The objectives of the UBE programme include:

Providing free and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.

Reducing the incidence of school dropout.

Ensuring the acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Promoting equal educational opportunities for all citizens regardless of gender, socio-economic status, or geographical location.

Improving the quality and relevance of basic education in Nigeria.

The UBE programme also includes complementary initiatives such as adult literacy programmes, nomadic education, and non-formal education schemes aimed at reaching marginalized populations who may not have access to formal schooling. Stakeholder participation in the UBE programme is critical for achieving its objectives. Different stakeholders contribute in various ways to support the development and implementation of the programme.

For instance, government agencies provide policy direction, funding, and institutional support for the programme. Teachers and school administrators are responsible for delivering educational services and ensuring that students receive quality instruction. Parents and communities support school activities, encourage children's attendance, and participate in school governance through organizations such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs). International development organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank also support the UBE programme through technical assistance, capacity building, and funding for educational projects. Overall, conceptual analysis shows that stakeholder participation is a fundamental element in the success of educational policies such as the UBE programme. Effective collaboration among stakeholders ensures that policies are not only well designed but also successfully implemented to achieve desired educational outcomes.

Theoretical Background

Theoretical background provides a framework for understanding the relationships among the key variables of a study. In research concerning educational policy development and implementation, theoretical perspectives help to explain how policies are formulated, how stakeholders interact, and how institutional structures influence outcomes. In assessing the role of stakeholders in shaping Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy development and execution in Nigeria, several theoretical frameworks are relevant. Among the most significant are Stakeholder Theory,

Systems Theory, and Participatory Governance Theory. These theories collectively explain the importance of collaboration, interdependence, and inclusive participation in the policy-making and implementation process.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory is one of the most relevant theoretical frameworks for examining the role of stakeholders in policy development and execution. The theory was popularized by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, who defined stakeholders as individuals or groups that can affect or be affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. The theory emphasizes that organizations and institutions must consider the interests and influence of various stakeholders in their decision-making processes. In the context of educational policy, Stakeholder Theory suggests that the success of policies such as the Universal Basic Education programme depends largely on the active involvement and cooperation of multiple stakeholders. These stakeholders include government agencies, teachers, school administrators, parents, community leaders, civil society organizations, and international development partners. Each of these groups possesses unique interests, resources, and capacities that contribute to the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Stakeholder Theory also emphasizes the importance of balancing competing interests among stakeholders to achieve common goals. For instance, while government agencies may focus on policy compliance and resource allocation, parents and communities are often more concerned with the quality and accessibility of education. Teachers, on the other hand, may prioritize issues such as professional development, teaching conditions, and adequate learning materials. Effective policy development therefore requires mechanisms that allow these different perspectives to be incorporated into the decision-making process. In the Nigerian UBE programme, Stakeholder Theory helps explain why collaboration between federal, state, and local governments, as well as community actors, is necessary for successful policy implementation. When stakeholders are adequately engaged, policies are more likely to reflect the needs of society and gain wider acceptance, thereby improving the likelihood of achieving desired educational outcomes.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory provides another important framework for understanding educational policy development and implementation. The theory views organizations and institutions as systems composed of interconnected and interdependent parts that work together to achieve common objectives. According to this perspective, changes in one part of the system inevitably affect other parts. In the context of education, the education sector can be viewed as a complex system involving various institutions, actors, resources, and processes. These components include government ministries, regulatory agencies, schools, teachers, students, parents, and community organizations. All these components interact with each other within a broader socio-economic and political environment.

Systems Theory suggests that the effectiveness of educational policies depends on the proper coordination and functioning of all components of the education system. If one component fails or functions inefficiently, it can negatively affect the entire system. For example, inadequate teacher training may lead to poor instructional quality, which in turn affects student learning outcomes. Similarly, poor coordination between federal and state

governments can hinder the effective distribution of educational resources. Applying Systems Theory to the Universal Basic Education programme highlights the need for strong institutional coordination among various stakeholders involved in policy implementation. The UBE programme operates through multiple agencies, including the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). These institutions must work together in a coordinated manner to ensure that educational resources, infrastructure, and instructional services are effectively delivered to schools across the country. Systems Theory therefore underscores the importance of collaboration, communication, and integration among stakeholders in achieving the goals of the UBE programme.

Participatory Governance Theory

Participatory Governance Theory emphasizes the importance of involving citizens and stakeholders in public decision-making processes. The theory is based on the idea that governance becomes more effective, transparent, and accountable when people who are affected by policies have opportunities to participate in their formulation and implementation. In the education sector, participatory governance promotes the inclusion of teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and civil society organizations in policy discussions and decision-making processes. Their involvement helps ensure that policies reflect the needs and realities of local communities while also promoting a sense of ownership and commitment to policy objectives.

In Nigeria, participatory governance mechanisms have been introduced in the implementation of the UBE programme through structures such as School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). These bodies allow community members to participate in school governance, monitor school activities, and contribute to decision-making processes related to school development projects. Participatory governance also promotes transparency and accountability in the management of educational resources. When stakeholders are involved in monitoring educational programmes, there is a greater likelihood that funds will be properly utilized and that policy objectives will be achieved. Furthermore, community participation can help address local challenges such as cultural barriers to education, low school enrollment, and gender disparities in school attendance. By encouraging collaboration between government authorities and local communities, Participatory Governance Theory highlights the importance of shared responsibility in achieving educational development.

The three theories discussed above collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding stakeholder participation in the development and execution of the Universal Basic Education policy in Nigeria. Stakeholder Theory explains the roles and interests of different actors involved in the education system and emphasizes the need for collaboration among them. Systems Theory highlights the interdependence of various components within the education sector and underscores the importance of coordination among institutions responsible for implementing the UBE programme. Participatory Governance Theory, on the other hand, stresses the importance of inclusive decision-making processes and community involvement in educational governance. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into how stakeholder engagement can influence the success or failure of educational policies. They also

help to explain why effective collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, communities, and development partners is essential for achieving the goals of the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria.

Challenges of UBE Policy Development and Implementation in Nigeria

Despite the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme as a major educational reform aimed at providing free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children, its development and implementation have been confronted with numerous challenges. These challenges have affected the effectiveness of the policy and limited its ability to fully achieve its objectives of expanding access to quality basic education and improving literacy levels in the country. The major challenges include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, weak institutional coordination, socio-cultural barriers, and issues related to monitoring and accountability.

Inadequate Funding

One of the most significant challenges facing the implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Although the federal government provides financial support through the Universal Basic Education intervention fund, the resources allocated to the programme are often insufficient to meet the growing demands of the education sector. Basic education requires substantial financial investment for the construction of classrooms, procurement of instructional materials, teacher recruitment and training, and maintenance of school facilities. Furthermore, the requirement for state governments to provide counterpart funding before accessing federal allocations has sometimes created additional challenges. Some states are unable or unwilling to provide the required counterpart funds, which results in unaccessed funds that could have been used for educational development projects. This situation has contributed to delays in the implementation of several UBE projects across the country. In addition, the increasing population of school-age children in Nigeria places additional pressure on available educational resources. Without adequate funding, it becomes difficult to provide the infrastructure and learning materials necessary for effective teaching and learning in schools.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Facilities

Another major challenge affecting the UBE programme is the shortage of adequate school infrastructure and learning facilities. Many public primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria lack sufficient classrooms, furniture, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities. In some cases, students are forced to learn in overcrowded classrooms or in buildings that are not conducive for effective learning. The lack of adequate infrastructure not only affects the quality of education but also discourages school attendance among students. Poor learning environments can lead to reduced student motivation, lower academic performance, and higher dropout rates. In rural and underserved communities, the situation is often more severe. Some schools operate without basic facilities such as electricity, potable water, and teaching materials. These conditions make it difficult for teachers to deliver effective instruction and for students to fully benefit from the educational process.

Shortage of Qualified Teachers

The shortage of qualified and well-trained teachers represents another major obstacle to the effective implementation of the UBE

programme. Teachers are central to the success of any educational policy because they are responsible for delivering the curriculum and facilitating student learning. However, many schools in Nigeria experience shortages of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. In some cases, schools rely on unqualified or underqualified personnel to teach students due to the lack of trained teachers. Even where qualified teachers are available, issues such as poor remuneration, delayed salary payments, and lack of professional development opportunities often reduce teacher motivation and productivity. In addition, the rapid increase in school enrollment resulting from the UBE programme has not always been matched with a corresponding increase in the number of teachers. This imbalance has resulted in high teacher–student ratios in many schools, which negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning.

Weak Institutional Coordination

Effective implementation of educational policies requires strong coordination among the various institutions responsible for policy execution. In the case of the UBE programme, implementation involves several agencies operating at the federal, state, and local government levels. These include the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). However, weak coordination among these institutions sometimes leads to duplication of responsibilities, delays in project implementation, and inefficient use of resources. Differences in policy priorities between federal and state governments can also affect the smooth execution of the programme. Additionally, bureaucratic processes and administrative inefficiencies often slow down decision-making and project implementation within the education sector. Without effective coordination and clear communication channels among stakeholders, the implementation of educational policies such as the UBE programme becomes more difficult.

Socio-Cultural Barriers to Education

Socio-cultural factors also pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of the UBE programme. In some communities, cultural beliefs and traditional practices discourage school attendance, particularly among girls. Early marriage, child labor, and preference for religious or informal education systems sometimes limit children's access to formal schooling. Poverty is another major socio-economic factor affecting school enrollment and retention. Many families struggle to meet basic needs and may require their children to engage in income-generating activities rather than attend school. Although the UBE programme provides free education, families may still face indirect costs such as transportation, uniforms, and learning materials. In some regions of Nigeria, particularly those affected by insecurity and conflict, schools have been disrupted or destroyed, making it difficult for children to access education. These conditions contribute to the large number of out-of-school children in the country.

Weak Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential for ensuring that educational policies are implemented effectively and that resources allocated to educational programmes are properly utilized. However, weak monitoring systems and inadequate supervision have sometimes allowed cases of mismanagement and corruption to occur within the education sector. Instances of misappropriation of funds, abandoned educational projects, and poor quality construction of school facilities have been reported in

some areas. These issues undermine public confidence in the education system and reduce the effectiveness of the UBE programme. In addition, the limited involvement of communities and civil society organizations in monitoring educational projects reduces opportunities for transparency and accountability. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is therefore essential for improving the implementation of the UBE policy.

Increasing Number of Out-of-School Children

Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world. Despite the objectives of the UBE programme to ensure universal access to basic education, millions of children remain outside the formal education system. This challenge is particularly pronounced in rural areas, northern regions, and communities affected by poverty and insecurity. The presence of a large population of out-of-school children undermines the overall goals of the UBE programme and highlights the need for more targeted interventions aimed at improving school enrollment and retention.

Overall, the challenges facing the development and execution of the Universal Basic Education policy in Nigeria are multifaceted and interconnected. Issues related to funding, infrastructure, teacher shortages, institutional coordination, socio-cultural barriers, and weak accountability mechanisms all contribute to the difficulties experienced in implementing the programme effectively. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving stronger stakeholder collaboration, improved policy planning, increased financial investment in education, and enhanced community participation in educational development initiatives.

Opportunities of UBE Policy Development and Implementation in Nigeria

Despite the numerous challenges confronting the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria, the policy also presents significant opportunities for improving the country's education system and promoting sustainable national development. These opportunities arise from increasing government commitment to educational reforms, growing stakeholder participation, advancements in technology, support from international development partners, and expanding community involvement in educational governance. When properly harnessed, these opportunities can strengthen the implementation of the UBE programme and help achieve its objectives of universal access to quality basic education.

Government Commitment to Educational Reforms

One of the major opportunities for improving the development and implementation of the UBE policy lies in the increasing commitment of the Nigerian government to educational reforms. Over the years, the government has recognized the importance of basic education as a foundation for national development and has introduced several initiatives aimed at strengthening the education sector. For example, the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the enactment of the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004 demonstrate the government's efforts to institutionalize the policy and provide a legal framework for its implementation. These measures have helped to strengthen the governance structure of basic education in Nigeria and ensure better coordination among federal, state, and local government authorities. In addition, the government has continued to allocate funds for the construction of classrooms, recruitment of teachers, and provision of instructional materials.

Although funding challenges still exist, increasing government attention to the education sector creates opportunities for policy improvements and better implementation strategies.

Growing Stakeholder Participation

Another important opportunity associated with the UBE programme is the growing participation of stakeholders in educational development. Stakeholder involvement has become increasingly recognized as a critical factor in the success of educational policies. Various groups, including teachers, parents, community leaders, civil society organizations, and development partners, now play more active roles in supporting educational initiatives. Organizations such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) have created platforms for community members to participate in school governance and decision-making processes. These structures encourage community ownership of educational programmes and improve accountability in the management of school resources. Furthermore, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations often advocate for educational reforms, monitor policy implementation, and provide additional support for schools. Their involvement helps to strengthen transparency and ensure that the objectives of the UBE programme are effectively pursued.

Integration of Technology in Education

Advancements in technology present another significant opportunity for improving the implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria. The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the education system can enhance teaching and learning processes, improve access to educational resources, and support innovative teaching methods. Digital learning platforms, educational software, and online training programmes for teachers can help improve the quality of instruction in schools. Technology can also facilitate remote learning opportunities, particularly in rural or underserved areas where access to qualified teachers and educational materials may be limited. In addition, technology can improve the monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes. Digital data management systems can help education authorities track school enrollment, teacher attendance, and student performance more efficiently. Such systems can also support evidence-based decision-making and improve accountability in the education sector.

Support from International Development Partners

International development organizations provide valuable support for the UBE programme through funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives. Organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Bank have implemented programmes aimed at strengthening basic education in Nigeria. These organizations often focus on improving access to education for marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and children living in rural or conflict-affected areas. They also support teacher training programmes, development of educational materials, and community awareness campaigns promoting school enrollment. Partnerships with international organizations create opportunities for Nigeria to benefit from global expertise and best practices in educational policy implementation. Such collaborations can contribute to the development of more effective strategies for addressing challenges in the basic education sector.

Community Engagement and Grassroots Support

Community participation represents another important opportunity for improving the execution of the UBE policy. Communities play a crucial role in promoting school enrollment, monitoring school activities, and supporting the overall development of educational institutions. In many communities, local leaders and parents actively participate in school development projects such as construction of classrooms, provision of school materials, and organization of community-based educational programmes. This grassroots support strengthens the connection between schools and the communities they serve. Community involvement also helps address socio-cultural barriers that may discourage children from attending school. By engaging community leaders and parents in advocacy efforts, it becomes easier to promote positive attitudes toward education and encourage greater participation in the formal education system.

Potential for Educational Innovation

The UBE programme also creates opportunities for innovation in the delivery of basic education. Educational authorities can explore alternative learning approaches such as non-formal education programmes, vocational training initiatives, and flexible learning systems designed to accommodate the needs of different groups of learners. For instance, programmes targeting nomadic populations, street children, and adult learners can help expand access to education beyond traditional classroom settings. These innovative approaches can contribute to reducing the number of out-of-school children and improving literacy rates across the country. Additionally, educational reforms aimed at improving teacher training, curriculum development, and school management practices can further enhance the quality of basic education in Nigeria.

Strengthening Policy Monitoring and Accountability

Improved monitoring and evaluation systems also present opportunities for strengthening the implementation of the UBE programme. Effective monitoring mechanisms can help identify challenges in policy execution, track progress toward educational goals, and ensure that allocated resources are used efficiently. Stakeholder involvement in monitoring activities can enhance transparency and accountability in the management of educational programmes. Community members, civil society organizations, and education professionals can all contribute to ensuring that educational projects are implemented according to established standards. Through effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, policymakers can make informed decisions and implement corrective measures when necessary. This process contributes to continuous improvement in the execution of the UBE policy.

Overall, the UBE programme provides several opportunities for improving access to quality basic education in Nigeria. Increasing government commitment to educational reforms, growing stakeholder participation, technological advancements, international support, and stronger community engagement all create favorable conditions for enhancing the effectiveness of the policy. If these opportunities are properly utilized, they can help address many of the challenges currently affecting the UBE programme and contribute to the achievement of universal basic education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the observations and analyses of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria, several critical recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the policy. These recommendations focus on strengthening stakeholder collaboration, improving resource allocation, enhancing teacher quality, leveraging technology, and addressing socio-economic and cultural barriers to education. When implemented collectively, they have the potential to significantly improve the development and execution of UBE in Nigeria.

1. Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration

A central recommendation is to enhance the involvement of all stakeholders including government agencies, teachers, school administrators, parents, communities, civil society organizations, and international development partners in both policy formulation and implementation. Effective stakeholder engagement should extend beyond symbolic participation to active decision-making and accountability roles. Government institutions should regularly organize stakeholder forums at federal, state, and local levels to discuss policy priorities, resource allocation, and performance outcomes. Additionally, integrating feedback mechanisms from community-based organizations and PTAs can help identify local challenges and opportunities, ensuring that policy interventions are contextually relevant (Imhanlahimi & Dim, 2020).

2. Increasing and Optimizing Funding

Adequate funding is a precondition for the success of the UBE programme. The Federal Government, in collaboration with state governments, should increase budgetary allocations for basic education and ensure timely disbursement of UBE intervention funds. Furthermore, funding strategies must prioritize equity, directing more resources to underserved and marginalized areas where educational deficits are most pronounced. To optimize fund utilization, governments should establish transparent financial management systems, including digital tracking of fund allocations, procurement processes, and project completion status. Third-party audits, in collaboration with civil society organizations, can improve accountability and reduce cases of fund mismanagement (World Bank, 2023).

3. Enhancing Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Retention

The quality of education is heavily dependent on the competence and motivation of teachers. Therefore, a comprehensive teacher development strategy is essential. This strategy should include: Targeted recruitment to address teacher shortages in rural and underserved areas. Continuous professional development programmes focused on modern pedagogical techniques, inclusive teaching, and classroom management. Incentives such as housing, allowances, and career progression opportunities to improve teacher retention in difficult-to-reach areas. Moreover, digital platforms can be utilized to provide ongoing training and access to instructional resources for teachers in remote locations, ensuring uniformity in teaching quality nationwide (Yusuf, 2023).

4. Infrastructure Development and Resource Provision

Improving school infrastructure and learning facilities is critical to creating an environment conducive to learning. Investments should focus on constructing additional classrooms, providing adequate furniture, equipping laboratories, libraries, and ensuring access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Instructional materials,

including textbooks, digital learning tools, and teaching aids, must be supplied in sufficient quantity and updated regularly. Public-private partnerships can be explored to support infrastructure projects, particularly in areas where government resources are limited (UNESCO, 2024).

5. Leveraging Technology for Education Delivery and Monitoring

Technological integration presents significant opportunities to improve both teaching and monitoring of the UBE programme. Digital learning platforms can supplement classroom instruction, particularly in regions with limited teacher availability. Additionally, technology can enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, enabling real-time tracking of school attendance, teacher performance, student outcomes, and resource utilization. Adoption of such systems can facilitate evidence-based decision-making and early identification of implementation gaps (UNICEF, 2022).

6. Addressing Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers

Efforts to expand access to basic education must actively address socio-economic and cultural constraints that hinder school attendance. Conditional cash transfer programmes, school feeding initiatives, and provision of free uniforms and learning materials can alleviate the financial burden on families and encourage enrolment. Moreover, community sensitization campaigns should focus on the value of education for girls, discouraging early marriage and promoting gender equality. Collaboration with religious and traditional leaders can enhance community acceptance and reinforce positive cultural attitudes toward education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

7. Fostering Inclusive Education

The UBE programme must ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities, nomadic populations, and other marginalized groups. This requires targeted interventions, including the development of accessible learning materials, specialized teacher training, and flexible schooling models that accommodate diverse learner needs. Such inclusivity ensures that no child is left behind and strengthens the equity dimension of the UBE policy (World Bank, 2023).

8. Strengthening Policy Research and Feedback Loops

It is recommended that the UBE programme institutionalize continuous research and policy evaluation mechanisms. Regular academic and field research should inform policy adjustments, ensuring that strategies remain responsive to emerging challenges. Feedback loops involving local stakeholders, civil society, and education experts can support adaptive policy-making and strengthen the overall governance of basic education (Imhanlahimi & Dim, 2020; Yusuf, 2023). In summary, these recommendations emphasize a multi-pronged approach: increasing funding, improving teacher quality, investing in infrastructure, leveraging technology, promoting stakeholder engagement, addressing socio-economic barriers, and fostering inclusivity. Implemented effectively, these strategies can enhance the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme represents one of Nigeria's most ambitious and transformative educational policies, designed to ensure that every child of school age has access to free and compulsory basic education. Since its inception in 1999 and the enactment of the Universal Basic Education Act in

2004, the UBE programme has expanded access to primary and junior secondary education across the country, addressing long-standing issues of illiteracy, educational inequality, and regional disparities in schooling. The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that the success of the UBE policy is deeply dependent on the active participation of multiple stakeholders, including government institutions, teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, civil society organizations, and international development partners. Where stakeholder collaboration is strong, there is clear evidence of improved school attendance, enhanced accountability, and better use of educational resources. Conversely, weak stakeholder engagement often correlates with inefficiencies, mismanagement of funds, and suboptimal educational outcomes.

Despite these positive contributions, several persistent challenges continue to undermine the effectiveness of the UBE programme. Inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, teacher shortages, weak institutional coordination, and socio-cultural barriers remain significant obstacles. These challenges have contributed to disparities in educational outcomes across different regions of Nigeria, with rural and northern communities often disproportionately affected. Moreover, a large number of children remain out of school due to poverty, insecurity, early marriage, and cultural practices, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to achieve true universal education. The study further observes that opportunities exist to strengthen the UBE programme. Government commitment to education, technological innovations, community engagement, and international support provide avenues for policy improvement and sustainable implementation. Leveraging these opportunities requires deliberate strategies, such as enhancing teacher training, integrating technology into classroom instruction, strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, and fostering inclusivity for marginalized groups.

From the perspective of policy implementation, stakeholders must be empowered to play more proactive and coordinated roles. Federal, state, and local governments need to ensure timely allocation of resources, while communities and civil society organizations should be mobilized to actively participate in school governance and monitoring. The private sector can also contribute through public-private partnerships aimed at improving school infrastructure and delivering innovative educational services. Furthermore, addressing socio-economic and cultural barriers is essential to expanding access and improving retention. Interventions such as conditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes, provision of learning materials, and community sensitization campaigns can reduce economic and social constraints to school attendance. Gender-sensitive policies and programmes should be prioritized to ensure that girls receive equal opportunities to education, especially in regions where cultural practices limit female school participation. Thus, the study emphasizes the importance of continuous research, policy feedback, and adaptive governance. Evidence-based policy adjustments, informed by both local and international research, are essential for improving UBE outcomes and sustaining its long-term impact. Integrating robust monitoring and evaluation systems can enhance transparency, accountability, and effectiveness across all levels of policy implementation.

In conclusion, the UBE programme has made significant strides in improving access to basic education in Nigeria. However, its long-term success depends on sustained stakeholder collaboration,

increased investment in education, improved teacher quality, effective resource management, and the implementation of context-specific interventions that address the unique challenges of different communities. By combining these strategies with a commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and accountability, Nigeria can achieve the full potential of its Universal Basic Education policy, promoting equitable and sustainable educational development for all children.

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