

# The Repositioning of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria Through School Library Resources

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## Abstract

This work deals with the process of repositioning the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme through the resources of school library. The realization of education as a vital tool in fulfilling development dream of any nation, compels every nation to give it required attention, Nigerians have steadfastly held believe that education is the fortification against poverty and social unrest. Schools have a central role in equipping our young people with the skills and attitudes they need to sustain our future economic and social development. Thus, Federal Government introduced Universal Basic Education scheme to cater for the educational needs of young students and pupils in the first nine years of school age. The paper employs descriptive research design and adopts quantitative data from a related article to discuss state of UBE scheme in Nigerian Educational system. Hence in the paper, we x-rayed the background and objectives of the scheme as well as that of the school library. The paper concludes by admonishing the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each State to provide an enabling environment for library personnel to effectively discharge their traditional roles and reposition the UBE scheme through its services. Also, government should devote more funds to the UBE scheme in order to construct modern library infrastructure and maintenance of the existing school library structures.

## Keywords

Universal Basic Education, Library, School Library, Library Resources

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## 1. Introduction

The realization of education as a vital tool in fulfilling development dream of any nation, compels every nation to give it required attention, Nigerians have steadfastly held believe that education is the fortification against poverty and social unrest. Schools have a central role in equipping our young people with the skills and attitudes they need to sustain our future economic and social development. This includes fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Yusuf & Alabi, 2013). Ali (2002) dreams of a situation which a functional education that produces food for the people, create

job, provides services and leads to democracy will become a reality. Basic education worldwide is the foundation for sustainable development and life-long learning. Basic education intends to provide the essentials skills in three important areas (e.g. reading, writing and arithmetic). To achieve this, both formal and non-formal education activities should be provided so that the receivers will acquire functional literacy. In the Nigerian context, the universal basic education covers primary, junior secondary and non-formal education and literacy aim at equipping recipients with appropriate attitudes, skills, knowledge and to ensuring that illiteracy is reduced to its barest minimum among the adult population of Nigeria in the nearest future. (Adu, 2004;

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Okiy, 2004; Yusuf & Alabi, 2013).

Moreover, the idea of universal education was first mooted in 1955 when the universal primary education (UPE) scheme was inaugurated by the government of Western Nigeria. The Eastern Nigeria government launched its own universal primary education in 1957. In Northern Nigeria, education was provided free by government in a bid to make children attend school (Adeyemi, 2007; Nakpodia, 2011). Thus, at its onset, the universal primary education scheme had been undertaken by regional government. There was no Federal Government intervention until 1976 when the universal primary education (UPE) was launched to cover the whole country. The period of universal primary education (UPE) marked the unprecedented growth at all levels of education which includes primary, secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria. The Murtala Mohammed/Obasanjo military regime launched the UPE scheme in October, 1976. The regime made primary education programme free. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is actually an expansion of UPE. Instead of ending it in primary 6, it now extended to the first three years of secondary education which is junior secondary school (Nakpodia, 2011).

From the work of Aluede (2006), universal means the whole people without exception. Basic means that on which anything rests. It is the root or bottom or the foundation from which other parts get support, while education will be interpreted to mean the act of bringing up or training of a child through instruction and in the process bring about the strengthening of his powers of body and mind to be able to understand his culture. Thus, the Federal Ministry of Education (2007), section 3 of the National Policy on Education defines basic education as a type of education comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school. The policy stipulates that education shall be free and compulsory. This scheme shall include adult and non-formal educational programmes at primary and junior secondary school levels for both adults and out of school youths (Nakpodia, 2011).

To this end, one of the remarkable events in Nigeria educational system during the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme. The scheme was formally launched on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999 in Sokoto, Sokoto State with a view of expanding the focus and scope of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of 1976 that was abandoned by previous administrations. This new programme concerns both the primary and junior secondary education (i.e. primary – JSS III) unlike the UPE scheme that was basically devoted to primary school educational system. The UPE aimed at giving free and compulsory education for age bracket of six (6) to fifteen (15) years with the school

curricula covering traditional knowledge, citizenship education, religion and moral education. Thus, Nwosu (2003) noted that, the scheme is borne out of the expectations to providing quantitative free and compulsory education to every Nigerian child from primary to junior secondary school i.e. the first nine years of schooling. The scheme also includes covering both the formal and non-formal aspects of education including issues relating to education of early childhood care up to junior secondary schooling. Hence, education must be given to all Nigerian childhood from early childhood care, primary school to junior secondary school levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to devise ways of repositioning the UBE programme through school library resources in Nigeria. The paper will equally unfold some crucial issues and problems that serve as threat to the effectiveness of UBE scheme in Nigeria with a view to generate some useful recommendations as a way forward.

## 2. Research Methodology

This paper is purely a review of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria. Hence, it employs a descriptive research design to discuss state of UBE scheme in Nigerian educational system. Being a review paper, it adopts a quantitative data postulated by Mohammed (2012) to drive home its point on how the UBE scheme in Nigeria should be repositioned through regular upward review of grants that would enable State governments in Nigeria to develop and maintain vibrant School libraries in the country.

## 3. Objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE)

Yusuf and Alabi (2013) noted that in conformity with all nation-state wide adoption of Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000; as earlier mentioned in this paper, Nigeria introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999 under the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The UBE is a newly packaged national programme of education; meant to conform with the UNESCO's transformative inclusion agenda, that all school aged children should be enrolled in school and given sound and appropriate education. Basic education should be of 9-year duration. Basic education is supposed to provide reading, writing and numeracy skills to the recipients. In Nigeria it includes both formal and non-formal education. Within the formal sub-sector, basic education embraces all forms of education given to the individuals from the six year primary school up to the end of three year Junior Secondary School (Fabunmi, 2004; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

## 4. The Dakar Education for All (EFA) Goals

According to Mohammed (2012), paragraph 7 of the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA defines the EFA goals which the governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the World Education Forum (2000), pledged themselves to achieve. They are:

- i. expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- ii. ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- iii. ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;
- iv. achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults;
- v. eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and
- vi. improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Realizing the importance of the EFA, Nigerian government in her own frameworks declares the UBE, which has among its objectives:

- ensuring an interrupted access to 9years formal education by providing FREE and COMPULSORY basic education for every child of school going age under: Six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education providing early childhood care development and education (ECCDE);
- to develop the entire citizenry a strong sensitiveness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- provide free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
- reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;

- 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;
- emphasis on curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations; and
- ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Tsafe, 2013)

However, the operation of UBE, which had been embarked upon to cater for educational needs and upliftment of all categories of Nigerian children, youths and adults, can only achieve much, if properly managed. Therefore, to cope well in the twenty first century, and to ensure the attainment of these laudable objectives, the child needs at least three basic skills (knowledge/information, permanent literacy and numeracy). The view of Digumarti (2008) was corroborative. The basic learning needs toward benefiting from world declaration on Education for All (EFA), comprises both literacy and numeracy skills. Therefore, UBE is being implemented in Nigeria as a lasting legacy for the eradication of illiteracy (Tsafe, 2013). The author while citing Federal Government of Nigeria (1999) further reiterated that basic education is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of formal and non-formal education activities and programs designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy (Tsafe, 2013).

## 5. The UBE Mission Statement

The scheme observed that at the end of the nine years of continuous education every child that passes through the system should acquire appropriate levels of literacy. Other skills include numeracy, communication, manipulation of life skills and be employable, useful to himself and society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic values. The mission statement states in part --- working in concert with all stakeholders by mobilizing the nation's energies to ensure that education for all becomes the responsibilities of all. The scope includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development, the six year primary education and the three year junior secondary school.

The Federal Government guidelines on implementation for the Universal Basic Education Programme of 1999 proffered some strategies which are to serve as guidelines for implementation. These include the fact that provision of the

educational programme should be universal, free and compulsory and efforts are to be made to counter the factors which have been impediments to global realization of previous education programmes e.g. Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000).

## 6. The Place of School Library in Repositioning the UBE Scheme

Generally, library serves as the nerve centre of all educational institutions and a crucial factor in the educational development of men at all levels especially in educational institutions. Libraries are spatial enablers of teaching and learning. It is associated with all forms of education; formal, informal and non-formal. It consists of a collection of books and other materials maintained and managed for reading, consultation, study and research and organized to provide access to users, with a well-trained staff to provide services to meet the needs of its users. The library, which is the hub of any educational set up, provides information and idea that are fundamental to functioning successfully in the increasingly information and knowledge-based society. The library is therefore able to equip pupils and students' imagination, thereby enabling them to live as responsible citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000; IFLA/UNESCO, 2002; Sote, Aramide & Gbotoso, 2011; Yaya, Achonna & Osisanwo, 2013).

Still on library concept, it is a service delivery centre of any institution of teaching and learning. It provides resources for the continuous sustenance of every institution in the human society (Yaya et al, 2013). Thus, the place of school library cannot be overemphasized in repositioning the UBE scheme in achieving its laudable objectives. This implies, without a functional and well-furnished school library, it will be very difficult for the aforementioned goals and objectives of the scheme to be realized. Hence, library serves as an operational base of any educational setting as it provides educational resources to support the curricula of any academic institution sited in the human society.

However, a school library according to Ogwu (2010) is often identified with primary and secondary school levels of education. The school library is unique amongst all other libraries (public, university/research, special, etc.) because its objectives are anchored on enriching the foundation of learning (pre-school, primary and secondary schools). The foundation of any endeavour is expected to be solid and should form the basis of a higher and lasting structure. The school library should form the foundation of a child's independent use of information. This foundation is expected

to consolidate the child's use and analysis of information at a higher level of learning and indeed throughout the child's life, when formal education would have terminated. The role of the school library, is therefore fundamental in the stimulation of learning skills, creative and reflective thinking, and more importantly, independent self-learning. This fundamental role of the school library in formal learning can be more fully captured when we realize that "the library is not aside from or a buttress to the curriculum but its skills is the very foundations of the curriculum" (Kinnel, 1992 in Ogwu, 2010).

Basically, school library according to Ogwu (2010) is set to inculcate the reading and learning skills in primary and secondary school pupils at their tender age. These are sharpened through access to a variety of carefully selected leisure reading materials (fiction). These are related to the skills of knowing when information is needed to solve a problem. How to locate and analyse information. How to combine information from different sources to create new and richer information. As well as how to evaluate the "new" information created.

Therefore, school librarian and the classroom teacher must cooperate in ensuring that these skills are taught to children by referring them to relevant information resources when completing class assignments, projects or group work. School libraries are invaluable education resources for primary and secondary schools. The National Policy on Education acknowledges this, so also does the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Implementation Guidelines. Education for All (EFA) implementation frameworks, the International Counterpart of Universal Basic Education (UBE) also recognizes this role of school libraries. Despite these policy guidelines and concern from well-meaning Educationists and Librarians, school libraries have not been given the same attention government has been giving to other aspects of the education delivery system. This has to be so if the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is to achieve its lofty objectives (Ogwu, 2010, p. 42).

Moreover, Raph (1962) in Aina (2004) and Davies (1969) outlined the following objectives of the school library as related to both primary and secondary school pupils:

- To participate effectively in the school programme as it strives to meet the needs of pupils, teachers, parents and other community members;
- To provide boys and girls with the library materials and services most appropriate and most meaningful in their growth and development as individuals;
- Stimulate and guide pupils in all phases of their reading so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction and may grow in critical judgment and appreciation;

- To provide an opportunity through library experience for boys and girls to develop helpful interests, to make satisfactory personal adjustments, and to acquire desirable social attitudes to discriminating users of libraries and of printed and audio-visual materials;
- To introduce pupils to community (public) libraries as early as possible and cooperate with those libraries in their effort to encourage continuing education and cultural growth;
- To work with teachers in the selection and use of all types of library materials, this will contribute to the teaching programme;
- Encourage the reading habits of the learner and give social training to pupils;
- Develop in pupils the ability to learn from books without teachers;
- Break down the rigid divisions which the school timetable often creates between different subjects;
- To provide boys and girls with the library materials and services most appropriate and most meaningful in their growth and development as individuals;
- Stimulate and guide pupils in all phases of their reading so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction and may grow in critical judgment and appreciation;
- To provide an opportunity through library experience for boys and girls to develop helpful interests, to make satisfactory personal adjustments, and to acquire desirable social attitudes to discriminating users of libraries and of printed and audio-visual materials;

Furthermore, school libraries are libraries attached to pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. They supplement the teaching of school children. A school library caters for children who are eager to read and also for backward children who read with difficulty and who require visual aids and all kinds of incentives to study. These libraries contain more of audio-visual and graphic materials such as pictures, photographs, realia, diagrams, etc, than other types of libraries. Other materials that may be contained in a school library which will help in repositioning the UBE scheme in Nigeria include books, journals, magazines, newspapers and other periodicals (Aina, 2004). However, a school library should have a balanced collection which must include printed and non-printed materials and electronic materials. The balanced collection should also include materials for leisure purposes such as novels, music, computer games, video cassettes and video laser discs, among others. These kinds of materials may be selected in cooperation with the students to ensure it reflects their interests and culture without crossing

reasonable limits of ethical standards (Sote et al, 2011). Also, Elaturoti (1998) noted that learning resources for school libraries consist mainly of print and non-print media. The print media include books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, handbills and ephemerals. However, books constitute the bulk of print materials in the school libraries, the non-print materials comprise of photographs, slide, audio tapes, film strips, motion films, video tapes, computers and realia.

Consequently, the introduction of the school libraries into Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes is aimed at providing current and relevant educational resources and geared toward reforming specifically, the basic education sector and the Nigerian educational sector in general. To buttress this assertion, Adediran (2003) noted that one of the objectives of the blueprint for the resuscitation of the basic education sector is enhancing and energizing the curricular and its delivery. Thus, school libraries are established to promote reading culture in Nigerian schools as well as enhancing and energizing the curricular and delivery. The replica of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in the States is known as the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The SUBEBs also have responsibilities for establishing libraries in the states. SUBEB libraries are supposed to be able to adequately provide library and information resources and services that will meet the needs of pupils and teachers as well as support school curricula. SUBEB libraries are designed to serve as model school libraries and benchmark for school libraries development (Sote et al, 2011).

Today, many school libraries have transformed into school library resource centres or media resource centres. Items collected in the library have been broadened to include toys and computers, study kits, films and film strips, video and audiotapes, video machines, cassette radios, etc. These items are acquired to ease learning on the part of students. Because of the variety of its collection, a school library is sometimes called a media resource centre (Aina, 2004). According to Hall (1986), the school as a resource centre is expected to provide:

- Information services that respond to the information needs of teachers and foster their professional development;
- Learning laboratory that provides opportunities for pupils to develop information skills and develop a commitment to informal decision-making;
- Learning laboratory that links learning and resources for learning; and
- Opportunities for pupils to become self-directed learners and develop a commitment to a lifelong learning.

Thus, for a school library to fulfil the functions listed above, the parent body must devote more funds for the acquisition of current and relevant educational resources that would effectively meet the information needs of those young pupils and teachers that constitute the major users of the library; also, it must be professionally managed. To Ogwu (2010), Libraries are continuing education centers. The school library actually stimulates the pupil to acquire the habit that should perpetuate learning-to-learn skills and life-long literacy culture so that the adult "graduate" continues to learn throughout life and continues to be useful to himself and society.

However, Aina (2004) decried that in most cases, the library is left in the hands of some unprofessional teachers, who might have undergone little or no training in librarianship, and such teachers are called teacher-librarians. While in most schools, libraries are left in the hands of some pupils as library prefects who have no idea about librarianship or library routines, books and other library collections are not well arranged in order to facilitate their easy accessibility and retrieval by library users. In most cases, they have library collections which are hardly useful to pupils and teachers. Also, most of the schools do not have neither what can be termed a school library nor a media resource centre. In such situation, how can the aforementioned goals and objectives of UBE be achieved? This shows reasons while most schools often recorded mass failure in junior and senior West African Examination Council (WAEC) yearly.

However, for a school library to effectively help in repositioning the Universal Basic Education scheme in Nigerian primary and post-primary schools, each State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) must take note of the following characteristics of a functional school library as postulated by Edwards (1973) in Ogwu (2010, p. 44):

“Store a wide range of books/non-books, printed and graphic materials, audio-visual software and the apparatus needed for its use. It must also stock objects such as models, specimens etc.; Have the record of such materials, organizations persons and places available outside the school, which would aid the learning process; Include space and equipment for the manufacture of learning materials by both staff and students; Be multi-purpose room for individual and group work, exhibitions, dram etc.; Library building should be located in a centre area for equal access by all; library resources should be organized in such a manner that accessibility and retrieval of information is quick and easy”.

Added to these, Yaya (2007) opined that every school library should employ some professional staff that would pilot its activities and they should be efficiently motivated to enable them carry out their professional duties. Although these may

sound like the ideal situation and over-ambition for our system, but most of these characteristics can be achieved in phases of development as the school library resources grows; more so, library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1963).

Consequently, Mohammed (2012) stated that the Federal Government, through Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), in accordance with the UBE Act of 2004, thus provides support grant to States for the implementation of the UBE programme. In disbursing funds, UBEC is guided by a Federal Executive Council approved sharing formula as required by Section 9(b) of the Act as shown in the table 1 below:

**Table 1.** The current Disbursement Formula in use.

S/N	Items	%
1.	Infrastructure/facilities provision as Matching Grants	50
2.	Educational Imbalance	14
3.	Special Needs Education	2
4.	Grants for Good Performance	5
5.	Provision of Instructional Materials	15
6.	Teacher Professional Development	10
7.	UBE Programme Monitoring	2
8.	UBE Implementation	2
Total		100

Source: Mohammed (2012). Laying the foundation for an enduring STM education in the Universal Basic Education programme. Available online at: [www.ubeonline.com](http://www.ubeonline.com)

The above table gives a quantitative data of the releases and disbursements as at 31st July 2012 by the Federal Government of Nigeria on the development and growth of UBE programme in every State of in Nigeria. Although this is commendable, it has to be reviewed upward regularly so as to accommodate the current prices of educational resources and to encourage full implementation and effective monitoring of UBE programme in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the SUBEB should also strive in providing the following:

- *Conducive Infrastructure and other facilities in school libraries:*

Educational facilities are imperative to qualitative UBE programme in Nigeria. Facilities such as textbooks, libraries, classrooms, seats and tables, laboratories, computers, technical/vocational equipment, electricity, etc are all very important for the effective implementation of the UBE scheme (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). There is therefore the need for adequate supply of these facilities and when fund is allocated for such facilities, it should not be diverted to other non-essential projects.

- *Recruitment of enough competent librarians*

There is also need for recruitment of enough professional librarians to effectively acquire all the relevant and current educational resources for the school libraries. There should also be training and re-training of librarians and other library personnel already on the job to ensure that they update their knowledge base.

- *Better motivation for school library personnel*

The school library personnel should be properly motivated to render quality service by regular payment of their salaries and improvement in what they are paid. With adequate motivation and remuneration, these workers can then work with renewed spirit and commitment to the UBE scheme. A motivated worker is a happy and productive workforce (Yaya, 2007).

- *Effective evaluation of school library resources*

The Commission should put in place programme that would help to monitor and evaluate school library resources regularly to ensure that the library collections does not deviate from the set goals of the scheme and that it adequately support the curricula and information needs of pupils, students and teachers in those schools that the scheme intends to serve.

## 7. Conclusion

It can be observed from this paper that UBE is a laudable programme that any Government that truly has interest in caring for the general populace especially the youth must vigorously pursued to a logical end. This can be easily done through the building and sustenance of functional school libraries in all schools in Nigeria. Hence, SUBEB of each State of the federation should provide an enabling environment for library personnel to effectively discharge their traditional roles and thereby reposition the UBE scheme through its services. The personnel should be well motivated and be provided with basic incentives that would enable them to be more productive; without this, the aim of government in introducing this laudable scheme would be in futility.

Besides, schools should encourage pupils to use the libraries through the creation of a library period on the time table and school librarians should teach pupils on the use of library. Also, the opening hours of the libraries should be extended beyond school hours to give pupils the opportunity of using the library. Teachers can encourage the pupils to use the library by giving them assignments that will take them to the library on a regular basis. The provision of computer based/electronic/multimedia learning resources should be taken seriously in order to enable teachers fit into the change in paradigm shift in education from teacher-centred to learner-centred.

Lastly, there is also the need for regular maintenance and renovation of library facilities. To this end, government should devote more funds to the UBE scheme in constructing modern library infrastructure and maintenance of the existing school library structures. Observation revealed that some of the facilities in most schools in Nigeria are deteriorating; hence there is need for repairs and renovation. Proper maintenance of the facilities will guide against total breakdown.

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