

An Assessment of Problems Militating Against the Effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study systematically examined the problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria. The paper relies on secondary data that were collected from print and online publications through a systematic review system. Content analysis was used to select the final works of literature. The paper concluded that inadequate funding, shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure facilities and poor capacity building programme are the problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the paper hereby recommends that the government should increase the budgetary allocation to the commission. This will help the commission employ adequate staff, provide adequate human and material resources needed to carry out the mandate of the commission. The government should ensure the provision of more physical facilities and supporting facilities in the commission to enhance the quality administration of institutions and service delivery. Although government alone cannot be held responsible for this, individual and corporate bodies need to participate to ensure the provision of facilities in the commission. The government should recruit more professionals in the field of education and deploy to the commission for effective implementation of the mandate of the commission in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Universal Basic Education, Education, School.*

1.0 Introduction

The Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education programme in September 1999 for the purpose of achieving free, compulsory and Universal Basic Education, and as a response to attaining Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UBE Programme, as a Policy reform, is aimed at rectifying distortions in basic education delivery in Nigeria and embracing basic education in the formal and non-formal sub-sectors. The programme has been implemented for about twelve (12) years. The Free, Compulsory, Universal Basic Education programme has the following components: 1. Programmes and initiatives for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for pupils aged 3 to 5 years; 2. Programmes and initiatives for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills, especially for adults (aged 15 and above); 3. Special programmes for the nomadic population,

Out-of-school children, non-formal programmes for persons who left school before acquiring the basics needed for lifelong learning; 4. Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education; and 5. The formal education system begins from primary school to Junior Secondary School (JSS) (Amuche & Kukwi, 2013; UBE commission, 2015; Ogunode & Abashi, 2020).

For the effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria, the federal government established a commission to manage the affairs of the UBE programme. The Commission, as an Intervention Agency, has a target of delivering basic education in Nigeria in line with the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education-for-All (EFA) goals by the year 2015 as follows:

A) Access: 100% of school-age children to graduate from Basic Education Institutions possessing literacy, numeracy and basic life skills to live meaningfully in the society and contribute to national development;

B) Quality:

- 1) 100% of basic education teachers to have a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE); and
- 2) 100% of Basic Education schools to have a conducive teaching and learning environment.

C) Equity:

- 1) Eliminate gender disparity in basic education, redress all forms of disadvantages and promote inclusive education (UBE, Commission, 2015).

Functions of the Commission

The functions of the Commission, as provided in the UBE Act 2004, are to:

- a) formulate policy guidelines for the successful operation of the universal basic education programme in the Federation;
- b) receive block grant from the Federal Government and allocate to the States and Local Governments and other relevant agencies implementing the Universal Basic Education following an approved formula as may be laid down by the Board of the Commission and approved by the Federal Executive Council; provided that the Commission shall not disburse such grant until it is satisfied that the earlier disbursements have been applied under the provisions of this Act;
- c) prescribe minimum standards for basic education throughout Nigeria in line with the **National Policy on Education** and the directive of the National Council on Education, and ensure the effective monitoring of the standards;
 - 1) enquire into and advise the Federal Government on the funding and orderly development of basic education in Nigeria;
 - 2) collate and prepare after consultation with the States and Local Governments and other relevant stakeholders, periodic master plans for a balanced and coordinated development of basic education in Nigeria, including areas of possible intervention in the provision of adequate basic education facilities, which include:
 - 3) proposals to the Minister for equal and adequate basic education opportunity in Nigeria;
 - 4) the provision of adequate basic education facilities in Nigeria; and
 - 5) ensuring that the Basic Education Curricula and Syllabi and other necessary instructional materials are in use in early childhood care and development centres, primary and secondary schools in Nigeria;

J) Carry out in concert with the States and Local Governments at regular intervals, a personnel audit of teaching and non-teaching staff of all basic education institutions in Nigeria;

1. monitor Federal inputs into the implementation of basic education;
2. present periodic progress reports on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme to the President through the Minister;
3. co-ordinate the implementation of the universal basic education-related activities in collaboration with non-governmental and multi-lateral agencies;
4. liaise with donor agencies and other development partners in matters relating to basic education;
5. develop and disseminate curricula and instructional materials for basic education in Nigeria.
6. establish a basic education data bank and research basic education in Nigeria.
7. support national capacity building for teachers and managers of basic education in Nigeria;
8. carry out mass mobilization and sensitization of the general public and enter into partnerships with communities and all stakeholders in basic education to achieve the overall objectives of Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education in Nigeria;
9. carry out such other activities that are relevant and conducive to the discharge of its functions under this Act; and carry out such other functions as the Minister may, from time to time, determine (UBE, Commission, 2015) (UBE, 2015).

2.0 Literature Review

Concept of the Universal Basic Education Commission

The Universal Basic Education Commission is a public institution established for the administration of the universal basic education programme in Nigeria. The Universal Basic Education Commission is a federal government agency mandated to supervise Universal Basic Education across the federation through the state UBE commission. The Universal Basic Education Commission is a public institution established by law to make policies, monitor and collect data on the universal education programme in Nigeria (Ogunode, 2025). The Commission, as an Intervention Agency, has a target of delivering basic education in Nigeria in line with the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education-for-All (EFA) goals by the year 2015.

3.0 Method

This paper explores and explores the problems militating against the effectiveness of universal basic education in Nigeria. Data from different secondary sources were employed for the paper. The paper used content analysis to analyze all the literature collected. Only those relevant to the topic were systematically selected. The exploratory method was adopted in the analysis. To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize the risk of error. The secondary data were collected directly from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers and other local and international publications on sexual harassment in tertiary institutions (adapted from Ogunode & Ukozor, 2023).

4.0 Results and Discussion of Problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria

The problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria include: inadequate funding, shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure facilities and poor capacity building programme.

A) Inadequate funding

One of the major problems militating against the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria is the challenge of poor funding. Sunday (2018) has identified inadequate funding as one of the problems facing Nigerian public institutions, especially educational agencies and commissions. This has, in no small measure, hindered their optimal performances over the years in the various commissions and agencies of the federal government (Ajayi & Akindutire in Ogunode 2020). Such a predicament adversely affects the administration of the institutions across the country. Consequently, delayed salaries and staff remuneration, poor infrastructure facilities provision, shortage of basic office amenities, poor maintenance of structures and poor staffing welfare are the effects of poor funding. Most public institutions in the country, which include the UBE commission, are poorly financed, and the consequence of this is more felt in the quality of the output from these commissions. The trend of poor performance in the area of supervision, data collection and poor monitoring and evaluation is the product of a shortage of funds.

B) Shortage of staff

Another problem hindering the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria is the challenge of a shortage of professional personnel. Femi (2020) noted that one of the reasons for the poor implementation of the core programme of the commission can be linked to shortage of staff. It is observed that most public institutions in Nigeria lack professional staff in the area of ICT and AI. Most public institutions contract many services out to private firms due to a lack of professional personnel in that field.

C) Inadequate infrastructure facilities

The state of physical facilities in many of the public institutions, including the UBE commission in Nigeria, is not encouraging. Apart from a shortage of these facilities, studios and workshops, many of the facilities are in deplorable conditions. The situation appears to be worse in the state public institutions in Nigeria.

D) Poor capacity-building programme

A poor capacity-building programme is another challenge to the effective management of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria. Capacity building takes place on an individual level, institutional level and societal level. On an individual level, it requires the development of conditions that allow individual participants to build and enhance existing knowledge and skills. It also calls for the establishment of conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change. On an institutional level, it involves aiding pre-existing institutions and supporting them in forming sound policies, organisational structures and effective methods of management (United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration in Ogunode & Oluseun, 2020). Capacity building is a process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that individuals, organisations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world (Philbin in Ogunode, Adah, Audu, & Wama, 2020). Effective implementation of capacity capacity-building programme for staff leads to improved job performance. Unfortunately, many public institutions in Nigeria do not constantly expose their staff to training and retraining programmes to improve their capacities. The poor capacity building programme in the public institution, which includes the UBE commission, has led to poor productivity among the staff.

E) Poor access to the Intervention fund

The Universal Basic Education Intervention Fund (UBE-IF) is the main federal funding that is provided to states for basic education and is designated for development expenditure only. This is funded by a statutory transfer of 2% of the FAAC revenue and overseen by the Universal Basic Education

Commission (UBEC). To access this FG intervention grant, the UBE Act also provides for the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to coordinate the implementation of the programme at the state and local government through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) (Olubor, 2018; Ojumor, 2018; Ogunyinka, 2013). Access to this intervention grant by the state government in Nigeria has been poor since the inception of the programme. It is being alleged that some state governments have not been able to access this because of many factors. The inability of the state government to access these grants has led to a huge volume of unused FG UBE grants. Recently, the executive secretary of the commission one that one of the challenges being faced by the Commission was the inability of some state governments to access UBE matching grants as and when due (Punch, 2025). UBEC commission noted that a total of N162.28 billion was allocated to states as UBE grants between 2019 and 2022, while only N116.07 billion was accessed by the 36 states and FCT. The executive secretary of UBEC observed: "Between 2019 and 2022, the sum of N162.28 billion was allocated to the states as UBEC grants, but only 11 states have accessed the matching grant." Speaking on the levels of matching grants accessed by states, he said in 2019, only Anambra failed to access the grant, while for 2020, six states, including Abia, Adamawa, Anambra, Ebonyi, Kwara and Ogun, failed to access the grant. For 2022 matching grants, 11 states, including Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ekiti, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, Ondo, Taraba and Zamfara States have accessed the funds (Lawal, 2024; Ogunode, Audu & Muhammad, 2023).

4.1 Findings

The paper revealed that inadequate funding, shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure facilities, poor capacity building programme and poor access to intervention grant are the problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study discussed the problems militating against the effectiveness of Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria. The paper concluded that inadequate funding, shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure facilities and poor capacity building programme are the problems militating against the effectiveness of the Universal Basic Education Commission in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the paper hereby recommends the following:

1) Increment in Budgetary Allocation:

The government should increase the budgetary allocation to the commission. This will help the commission employ adequate staff, provide adequate human and material resources needed to carry out the mandate of the commission.

2) Adequate Facilities

The government should ensure the provision of more physical facilities and supporting facilities in the commission to enhance the quality administration of institutions and service delivery. Although government alone cannot be held responsible for this, individual and corporate bodies need to participate to ensure the provision of facilities in the commission.

3) Employment of adequate staff:

The government should recruit more professionals in the field of education and deploy them to the commission for effective implementation of the mandate of the commission in Nigeria.

4) Good Staffing and Welfare

The government should ensure that staff in the Universal Basic Education are constantly exposed to training and retraining programmes. This will help to improve their productivity at work.

5) Reform of the UBE Act

The federal government should review and reform the act establishing the commission and its mandate to be flexible and accessible to more state governments by reducing the conditions attached to the funds.

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