



## Vocational and Technical Education for self-reliance through Universal Basic Education (UBE)

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### Abstract

Educational institutions can do a lot in the preparation of students for a world of work through the acquisition of relevant skills that can foster self-reliance and creativity. Before now the content of education to a large extent was irrelevant in improving the human resources for national development. Nevertheless, with the introduction of vocational and technical education (VTE) into the curriculum and introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) emphasis is now placed on skill acquisition and self-reliance. However, the UBE programme is faced with the problems of acute infrastructural development, provision of adequate instructional materials, training and retraining of vocational and technical education (VTE) teachers. Therefore, this paper is geared towards blending the relevance of VTE in (UBE) and suggests ways of proper implementation of UBE programme that will transform vocational and technological standard of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Vocational and Technical Education (VTE), Universal Basic Education (UBE), skill acquisition, self-reliance, creativity, educational reform

### Introduction

Nigeria's education policy is one of the social policies of government used in strengthening and improving the human resources capacity base of her citizens. This is why education has been adopted in Nigeria as an instrument 'per excellence' for effecting national development (FRN 2004). Chukwuka and Adekunle (2018) <sup>[1]</sup> 'explained that education is a tool for skill acquisition, relevant knowledge and habit for surviving in the changing or dynamic world'. The school can do a lot in the preparation of students for vocation of their choice through the transformation process, inculcating respect for labor and self-reliance. Hence, the national education goal calls for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental physical, social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

It is quite unfortunate that education has not been successfully used as a tool to realize the above the above objective due to the inconsistency in the implementation of educational programmes, bureaucratic bottlenecks, misappropriation of funds meant for the educational sector, inadequate man power, incompetent teachers, obsolete curriculum, inadequate infrastructure and instructional materials.

Below now the content of education to a large extent was irrelevant to the survival and wellbeing of the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, with the introduction of vocational and technical education into the school curriculum and the advent of Universal Basic Education (UBE) emphasis is now placed on skill acquisition and self-reliance.

### In fact, this paper is developed along these areas

1. Meaning of UBE and UTE.
2. The role of VTE in National Development.
3. UBE programme; scope and objective.
4. Vocational and technical education in UBE programme.

The challenges and problems facing proper implementation of VTE way forward.

The Universal Basic Education programme was introduced in the country in September 1999 by Chief OLusegun Obasanjo to serve as a catalyst to the entire Nigerian Education System and particularly the primary education sub-sector. The Universal Basic Education programme is compulsory for all children from six to fifteen years old. It is a nine years straight course from primary to junior secondary school. Its main focus is to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty.

### Concept of Vocational and Technical Education

Technical and Vocational Education according to the FRN (2004 Education) is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to the general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes understanding and Knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. Ma Aji (2011) <sup>[7]</sup> defines VTE as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare individuals for employment and also acquiring knowledge and skills in areas such as agriculture, home economics, computer, Business trades, arts and crafts etc. From the above definition, it can be deduced that vocational and technical education in schools should be more of practical than theory.

### Roles of Vocational and Technical Education in National Development

Vocational and technical education is an integral part of general education, a channel of preparing for occupational jobs, preparation for effective participation in the world of work, a means of poverty alleviation and preparation for responsible citizenship. (Okparaekwe, 2022) <sup>[8]</sup> identified the following roles of vocational and technical education in Nigerian.

1. Developing positive and creative thinking which makes individuals to develop skills and exploit the world around us.
  2. It will enable individuals to be self-reliant and create employment opportunities for others.
  3. Adapting to innovations and technological changes as a way of preparing for participation in the world of work through regular training and retraining in the use of modern tools and equipments as well as adapting to new innovation in science and technology.
  4. Vocational and technical education can go a long way in the reduction of child rate and exploitation by exposing learners to career awareness of exploring useable options in the world of work.
  5. Reduction in school dropout. Students are motivated to appreciate the need of technology from junior secondary school and choice of profession/vocation later in life.
3. Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living among others. This is where vocational and technical education (VTE) becomes relevant in the Universal Education (UBE) programme (making people self-reliant).
  4. Encouraging community participation in decision making process in school with a view to engendering community interest in and eventful ownership of basic education institutions.

The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 has therefore made a conscious attempt at closing the gap by making basic education compulsory and free for all school-age children, delineated role for each critical stakeholder and provided punishment for defaulting stakeholders. Key aspects of the law include.

### The Universal Basic Education Programme

The Universal Basic education programme (UBE) attempts to address the existing problem Illiteracy, ignorance and unemployment. Therefore, in order to address the inconsistencies, Resistance and bottleneck to UBE programme and to give it a legal basis upon which to operate.

The court enforced the draft bill to be in line with the 1999 constitution. Therefore, both the Nigerian constitution and the National body on education recognize education as an Inalienable right of every Nigerian to eradicate illiteracy, and to provide free and compulsory education. However, this noble educational objective is non-justifiable, meaning it cannot be challenged in any court of law by a person or authority.

### Aims and Scope of the Universal Basic Education Programme

The UBE Act of 2004 stipulates that the programme comprise early child hood care and Development Education (ECCDE). Six years of primary education and three years of junior Secondary education. The UBE is seen as a continuous nine-year educational programme that aims at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty with the general goal stimulating and accelerating national development, political consciousness and national integration. In the same vein the guidelines for operating the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP) should be a collaborative effort involving the three tiers of government, civil society and international donor agencies. It is basically a funding arrangement which obliges Federal government to provide financial and technical assistance to states in support of their responsibility to deliver basic education. Ekwu (2024)<sup>[3]</sup> reaffirmed that Universal Basic Education Programme is a reform programme, which is initiated by the federal government and brought into the education system with the aim of reinforcing the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 as stipulated in the National Policy on Education and relevant laws, the UBE programme strive to achieve the following objectives.

1. An uninterrupted access to 9- years formal education by providing free compulsory education for every child of school age (6 – 15 years).
2. To drastically reduce incidence of school dropout and ensure quality and efficiency in the sub-system.

- a. The federal government shall provide assistance to the state and local government in Nigerian for the purpose of uniform and qualitative basic education throughout the country.
  - b. Every level of government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal Basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age.
  - c. Every parent shall ensure that his/her child or ward attends and completes primary school and junior secondary school education.
  - d. Stakeholders in education in a local government area shall ensure that every parent or person who take care and custody of a child performs the duty imposed on him/her under the universal basic education Act 2004.
5. Every parent shall ensure that his/her child receives full-time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude by regular attendance at school.
  6. A parent who does not enroll or withdraws his/ her child/ ward from school contravenes section 2(2) of the UBE Act, and therefore commits an offence and will be liable.
    - a. On first conviction, to be reprimanded.
    - b. On second conviction, to a fine of #2,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of one month or both and.
    - c. On subsequent conviction to a fine of #5000.00 or imprisonment for a term of two months or both.
  7. The services provided in public primary and junior secondary schools shall be free of charge. These are tuitions, books, instructional materials, furniture and mid-day meal.
  8. A person who receives or obtains any fee contrary to the provisions of the Act commits an offence and is liable to conviction to a fine not exceeding #10,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of three months or more.
  9. The magistrate or any other state court of competent jurisdiction shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine cases arising from non-compliance of the provision of the Act and impose the punishment specified.

Transition from junior primary to secondary school (Jss) shall be automatic, as basic education terminates at the JSS level. Thus, entrance examination at the end of primary VI

for admission into JSS is abolished. Emphasis will be placed on effective school-based assessment while final examination and certification will be done at the end of the nine-year basic education programme.

The secondary school system should be organized in a way that will ensure that the JSS system is disarticulated from the SSS as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) with its distinct goals and programmes.

**Source:** UBE (Act, 2004).

As good as the UBE Act (2004) is, some of the specifications are not adhered to the letter by the implementers particularly, the separation of JSS and SSS. In the states of the country they operate under the same environment.

### **Vocational and Technical Education in Universal Basic Education**

Schools can be used to change the economy and the cultural sub-system of our nation through effective implementation of VTE in UBEP (Okwuanaso and Anyaso, 2020)<sup>[9]</sup> More so, in the education production process where many skills are acquired to fulfill one of the major objectives of producing educated, skilled and employable individuals who will be useful to themselves and the society. Prior to the present National Education Policy, the poor development of vocational education made many school products/leavers to hate working with their hands and in the rural areas. However, with the introduction of the UBE programme initiated by the former president Obasanjo, there has been an improvement on the productive capacity of individuals, change of traditional attitudes, beliefs and practice that are inimical to human and national progress.

Therefore, for UBE to succeed in vocational and technical at the JSS level, government should intensify its political will to embark on massive expansion of technical colleges. Okamadiri (2021) suggested that if VTE will be well articulated in the primary and JSS levels of education then there is need for government to restructure and create avenue for pupils/students to acquire concrete functional skills in Agriculture, Home Economics, Arts, Crafts, computer etc. The National Policy on Education states that the preparatory aspects of pre-vocational training offered to students at the Junior Secondary School is for the purpose of

- Acquiring technical skills.
- Exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work.
- Enabling youth to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

To achieve the above objective, the UBE curriculum shall contain.

- General education.
- Theory and related courses.
- Workshop practice.
- Industrial Training/ Productive work.
- Small business management and entrepreneurial training.

For vocational and Technical Education to be functional, the curriculum should be relevant to the needs of the society.

Challenges and problems facing the proper implementation of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme

The Major component area of UBE intervention is in the areas of infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials and teacher professional development (framewole, Oke, Amadi, 2021).

There are economic trends presently occurring worldwide which are also affecting many Nigerians as identified by Oliatan (1996) they are.

- Reduction in employment opportunities.
- Growth of jobs available in the service sector than agriculture and industrial sector.
- Growth in information than formal employment.
- Rapid changes taking place in job profile particularly in specific skills.
- Inadequate facilities and infrastructure, overcrowded classroom.

Ignorance of the values of VTE as a catalyst for attainment of self-reliance, as affirmed by Etuk, Eringe Ajake (2012)<sup>[2]</sup> 'is based on the society values or misconception that students who are low achievers, low intelligence and dropouts from schools go for VTE training'. Therefore, students don't show interest in VTE while in school. Consequently, senior secondary school graduates who are able to secure admission into higher institutions graduate without saleable jobs skills thereby increasing the number of unemployable university graduates.

Some VTE programmes are not indigenized to suit the needs of the Nigerian environment particularly at the basic state (primary and Jss). Therefore, the students are not learning what they are supposed to learn. Furthermore, some teachers lack the technical knowhow on how to operate and maintain some of the imported machines which are still lying in their packages in some schools. While such machines are either sold out by some corrupt school administrators or vandalized by hoodlums.

**Training of Teachers in VTE:** In teacher training institutions, there is no difference between General Education and mode of teacher preparation in VTE. It is important to note that general education deals with the cognitive aspect of learning and VTE is concerned with both the cognitive and the psychomotor. Although the government recently introduced Primary Education Studies (PES) in conjunction with the normal NCE but their graduate is inadequate to cater for the existing primary schools. In addition, most schools lack competent teachers to train students in vocational and technical skills. More so, some of the equipments and machines are not in use, therefore students are taught only the theoretical aspect of the relevant subjects (Agricultural science, Home Economics, and fine arts) thereby graduating the learners ill-equipped.

### **Ineffective supervision of allocation and proper utilization of funds made for UBE programme**

Considering the huge investment already made by the government, one would aspect the schools to be performing much better than what it is today. Many schools, especially in the rural areas lack adequate infrastructural facilities and teaching materials. It is disheartening to see students sitting on bare floor or ground to receive lessons and some even learn under trees.

The machinery for monitoring funds disbursement and utilization has not been doing the needful. As a result, funds disbursed for projects have either been diverted or mismanaged or inefficiently invested.

**The problem of social vices in the country:** Bribery, corruption, embezzlement and abuse of public office have eaten deep into the fabrics of our educational system or society in general, especially in the UBE programme where the federal government has a sharing formula mandated by law directed that.

- 70% Of UBE fund be shared to the 36 states.
- 14% is shared to states to correct educational imbalance within and between states.
- 5% to states that are doing very well in the implementation of the UBE programmes as incentive.
- 5% dedicated to school feeding and health programme.
- 2% to address issues of special needs such as the education of physically and mentally challenged.
- 2% for the monitoring the implementation of programme.
- 2% as UBE commission's implementation fund.

**Source:** Adapted from Gidado (2006).

Unfortunately, the funds are not used as specified because of the corrupt nature of the implementers of the policies who are either politicians or non- educators.

### Way Forward

1. There is urgent need to open up the rural areas through road rehabilitation, construction and maintenance of more feeder-roads, provision of portable water, electrification and the mobilization of the youths to participate in profitable economic activities. As it is, the rural dwellers are the major suppliers of the greatest necessity of life (food). When the above infrastructure is out in place, hopefully there will be reduction in unemployment rate and reduction in the rural- urban drifts by the youths.
2. The curriculum should be designed in a way to expose students/learners to local resources of experimentation and content activities that would enable the students to further develop certain aptitude towards skill acquisition. There are curriculum materials with strategies for their implementation through methodologies that will be better suited to students and the communities where the schools are located. For example, introduction of practical agriculture in animal production (fishery) and crop production (arable crops) appear to be the best immediate option for the problem of starvation, low incomes from other non-oil sectors, inflation, unemployment and so on. However, agriculture is still primitively characterized; with low yields, low producer incentive as well as transportation and shortage of processing and storage facilities. The federal government, non- governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals can improve on the state of agriculture in Nigeria and make it attractive to the youths. When this is done, the youths will be motivated to go into agricultural production using modern technology.

### Conclusion

If sufficient attention is given to the implementation of UBEP by proper by proper organization of all schools and providing the necessary materials and competent teachers,

there will be definitely a transformation of vocational and technological standard of the nation. It will also have great impact and prospects for the teeming population of unemployable graduates and full industrialization of our economic sector.

### Recommendation

The following recommendations have been made;

- Training and re-training of technical teachers to meet the requirements of the UBE programme should be done on regular basis.
- The present formula for admission of students into tertiary institutions where 40% is given to Arts and 60% to science should be followed to the latter,
- Emphasis should be on practical work than the theoretical aspects of subjects like computer, Home Economics, Agricultural science, Arts, Crafts, Basic Science and Technology etc,
- For effective learning and teaching, teacher-pupil ratio (1:35) should be adhered to the letter.
- The government should set up monitoring teams to supervise the disbursement, allocation and utilization of funds meant for teaching materials, infrastructural facilities and other needs of the schools
- Government should create enabling environment and motivation for the nation's youths and if possible set up a trade for them after graduation.

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