

# **A Review of Nigeria's Universalization of Education and the Perceptible Analysis of Universal Basic Education as a Concept and Phenomenon**

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**DOI Link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i7/3132>

**Published Date:** 19 July 2017

## **Abstract**

This paper traced the antecedent to the current Universal Basic Education in Nigeria, reviewing the very beginning of universalising education as a human right, declared in 1948 and from other global protocols, particularly the 1990 Jomtien's declaration in Thailand; down to the regional and national efforts of the various Nigerian governments on Universal Primary Education (UPE) - colonial to post-colonial. The paper focuses on the variously emerging attributions and developments about UBE which call for concern. From the provisions of the UBE Act (legal backing) and the basic education component of the National policy, necessitating a discernible analysis. Examination of UBE's concepts and operations as a phenomenon and problem of study even in higher educational research, forms part of the thrust of the paper; thereafter, various highlights associated with UBE are appraised, considering the extent of mystification in the provisions of the Act. The various misconceptions by the public and the private UBE providers, branding it what it is not; to attract numbers in selling their products are identified. Higher institutions' academic researchers and educational consultants have also displayed some clear distortion in the presentation of facts about UBE, resulting in the popularisation of incorrect research results and misleading discussions published and erroneously referenced by other researchers. Critically, this paper justifies with critical assessment, analysis and corroborates its arguments with some of Frequently Asked Questions by the Universal Basic Education Commission; in her 40-Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The paper concludes, urging the government to play her statutory roles with seriousness. The UBE service providers are also admonished to play by the rules and not being cosmetics. Importantly, academic researchers in our higher institutions are as well enjoined to be factual, evaluate sources of their data before drawing conclusions.

**Keywords:** Universalising Education, Perceptible Analysis, UBE, Concepts and Phenomenon.

## **Introduction**

The concern of this paper is borne-out of the worries associated with the experiences of the writer as an educational historian and policy analyst, who has witnessed a great deal of distortion in the concepts and phenomena in the country's educational practices. In academics, the purpose for which higher institutions are established in Nigeria or elsewhere in the world is among others; the mandate to conduct research that will benefit and inform the people, consequently improving the society. It is, however, being discovered and so worrisome that UBE is plagued and branded with so many indefensible features it is ascribed. It has been advanced as a reason for its birth that UBE has come to correct the errors of the past. Significantly, there is the need therefore to engage in analysis that is based on facts and figures, this by clarifying and invalidating the misconceptions and errors that are persistently committed by the general public about UBE on one hand and on the other, by those in academic (of higher institutions) who with their monumental knowledge concerning educational issues are expected to be well informed and adequately updated about everything concerning UBE.

It is disturbing to read on the pages of publications (journals and books), even in some working documents of international agencies and above all; hear in public presentations what ought not to be interpreted the way they were presented. From the foregoing, this paper intended to provide factual information on UBE as a concept and situate all issues surrounding it as phenomena that call for proper investigation and clarifications before they are utilised in public presentation, academic discourse, research writing and so on; to eliminate the decorated historical distortion spreading among academics circles to the uninformed learners and the general public. It is also to ensure accurate documentation of facts and figures, necessary for achieving the desired goals of UBE in Nigeria. In the course of this paper therefore, it is significantly recognized that attention should be fully devoted to the discussion on all of this to remove the myriads of UBE's misconceptions.

First and foremost, being retrospective about this issue is considered necessary to depict the antecedent which gives the study a direction and basis for the line of thought of the researcher in the discussion, because the trend is an historical situation that should be assessed in its contemporary state.

## **The Case of Universalising Education in Nigeria**

The idea of making education universal in the world was first conceived by the United Nation in 1948, following the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Abdulrahman-Yusuf and Ogbondah (2007) portray that article 26 recognizes education as a right of every human being. The Article in its items (i), (ii) and (iii); stresses that:

- i. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- ii. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- iii. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

In Nigeria, universalising education is traceable to a period in the colonial era, precisely when John MacPherson became the Nigeria's Governor General in 1951. In the assessment of the issue of misconceptions in the Universal Basic Education programme, an examination of the trend from the very root is desirable. As Aluede (2006) once remarked that the current UBE scheme in Nigeria can be said to be the product of earlier educational scheme, programmes and educational decisions. It is the offshoot of previous schemes, which could be said to have been bedevilled by problems, which the current scheme is expected to offset. It should be noted that educational activities of the 1950s laid the foundation stones for later educational developments in the 1960s and beyond. Therefore, educational activities of the 1950s were themselves determined by the history of educational growth from the fourth decade of the 19th century. By implication therefore, educational explosion in the Western region had influences on the other regions.

However, regional rivalry heightened with the evolution of the 1951 Macpherson constitution which provided opportunities for regions to utilise rights the constitution bestowed on them for their development, that is, legislative powers to the regions, to legislate on matters relating to education, health and agriculture. First to utilise these legislative powers on education and translate the rivalry among regions into positive use, as noted above was the Western region which under the political leadership of Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo proposed to the regional House of Assembly the party's priority in the budget, focusing on education and health. From historical accounts by Fafunwa (1974), Osokoya (1995), Abiri and Jekayinfa (2010) and Abdulrahman (2012), it was recalled that in July 1952, Chief S. O. Awokoya who was then the Western Region Education Minister announced the decision of the Action Group (AG) to start the scheme - UPE by 1955. The plan eventually materialised with its launch in the West on the 17th day of January, 1955.

Subsequently in the year 1953, the Education Minister for the Eastern Region, Mr. R.T. Uzoma, like his counterpart in the Western Region presented a proposal for the introduction of free primary education to come into effect in 1957. Unfortunately, the crisis that engulfed the NCNC in 1953 led to a cabinet re-shufflement and some party members renounced their membership to join other political parties. In this regard, the old arrangement in respect of the UPE scheme by the former administration was rejected by Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe-led new government. Eventually, 1957 witnessed the launch of UPE in the Eastern region.

Also, in 1951, Lagos was merged with the Western Region under the Macpherson constitution for being a Yoruba speaking area (Osokoya, 1989). However, in 1954, Lagos became a Federal Capital Territory, as a result of which it was separated from the Western Region. By implication, Lagos was not part of the 1955 Western region UPE, but had to design its own UPE scheme if it wanted its subjects to have the benefit of the programme. Therefore, in January, 1957 the UPE scheme was launched.

In the Northern Region, having launched the UPE scheme earlier in the Western and Eastern regions, it was practically impossible to do same in the Northern region, for the reason of financial constraints. Instead of launching the UPE scheme, the Northern Regional government paid a serious attention to the development of education in the rural areas and the promotion of adult literacy. Osokoya (1989) and Akinbote et al (2001) state that the regional government in the North eventually decided to have primary education on a provincial basis in 1958, just as emanated in the other two regions, the introduction of UPE scheme in the Northern Region witnessed a numerous problems, of which necessitated the

setting up the Oldman's Commission in 1960 to specifically look into the financial, as well as the administrative problems which greeted the introduction of the scheme in that region.

No region was spared of one problem or the other characterising its implementation of the scheme. These, ranging from paucity of funds, overstretching of facilities, overcrowding, teachers' low commitments among others which at various times necessitated setting up of post-independence commissions/committees headed by Banjo, Ajayi and Taiwo in the west; and in the east by Dike and Ikoku ((Abdulrahman, 2014). In a nutshell, all the regions faced apparent problems in the implementation of the schemes, but at varied extent.

### **UPE as a Nationwide Scheme**

The realisation by the Federal Military Government of the inadequacies that greeted the operation of UPE scheme in the regions and the need to be centrally responsible for education of Nigerians at the elementary level became an impetus for the Federal Government to provide Free and Universal Primary Education in the country and making it a nationwide scheme. The then Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd.) launched the scheme at Oke-Suna Municipal Primary School in Lagos; precisely on the 6th of September, 1976. The intention was to make it compulsory by 1979 as a response to the African Education Ministers agreement at the Addis Ababa conference in 1961; to achieve universal primary education by 1980 in the continent.

### **The Fate UPE as A Nationwide Scheme**

The Military handover of power to the civilian administration in 1979 caused the retrogression in the entire situation about the Free Universal Primary Education. The Shehu Shagari's National Party of Nigeria-led civilian administration had a programme different from that of the Military junta. The manifesto of the NPN on education emphasised qualitative education and not free education. Although, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) controlled States of old Oyo, Ogun, old Ondo, Lagos and former Bendel States had the party's manifestos of free education pursued, until such a time it was cash-trapped. Since free education was not the NPN's programme, consideration was not given for this in the allocation to concerned States. Up till 1983, the affected States were still trying to cope with the situation; the scheme did not receive any attention from the reappearance of military administration that came in through the December 1983 *coup d'état*. The Buhari-Idiagbon military regime had nothing like free education in their agenda. Since that period, Free Universal Primary Education suffered a natural death as successive military administrations, from Ibrahim Babangida, Sanni Abacha to Abubakar Abdulsalam never had resuscitation of the UPE in their education programmes for the country.

### **The Concept of Universal Basic Education (UBE)**

The second coming of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as a civilian President of Nigeria provided a good fortune for country's education at primary and post-primary levels. The establishment of UBE has a very significant relationship with the World Education Conference which Nigeria participated at Jomtien, Thailand from March 5th – 9th, 1990. The 1990 Jomtien's Conference in Thailand had Nigeria as one of the signatories to the declaration of Education for All (EFA) attended by 155 countries and 150 organisations. With this declaration, every child is expected to be educated. Government of various countries were expected to demonstrate this commitment at least at the elementary/primary level.

Other international frameworks that provided the Nigerian Government with the idea of being proactive about universalising education which metamorphosed into UBE included the New Delhi Declaration -1991 requiring stringent efforts by the E-9 countries (nine countries of the world with the largest concentration of illiterate adults) to drastically reduce illiteracy within the shortest possible time frame (Okiy, 2004). In the same vein, UBE in Nigeria is also a demonstration of interest in the Durban Statement of Commitment of 1998 and the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) (now, AU) - Decade of Education for Africa, 1997–2006 which requires African states to generalize access to quality basic education as a foundation stone for sustainable socio-economic development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000).

A *raison d'être* for Universal Basic Education can be internally seen according to UBEC (2004) as pivotal to the attainment of and is interlinked with National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS). However, the most significant and practical impetus to the launching of UBE in Nigeria was the second opportunity of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to consolidate on what he formerly initiated nationally as a Military Head of States in 1976, bringing to the fore again as a civilian president; the issue of primary education and expanding its scope to include the first three (3) years of secondary schooling, that is the Junior Secondary School (JSS). In short, UBE was ceremoniously launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999 in Sokoto, Sokoto State.

UBE is free, compulsory and universal. This is one scheme that integrates the non-formal and vocational training as its component. The scheme after its launching in 1999 had its bill passed into law in 2004 by the Nigeria's National Assembly, hence the UBE 2004 Act of Parliament. The Act provided for a number of things, among which:

- the mid-day meal should be given to the pupils
- the imposition of fines on parents refusing their children education in the first instance
- the imposition of fines or and imprisonment of parents refusing their children education on second and third convictions
- disarticulation principles etc. were therein enshrined.

It's good to mention here that the curriculum for the UBE eventually came out in 2008, having subjects like introductory technology, primary science etc. restructured as Basic Technology, Basic Science, Computer Studies also became an integral part of the primary education curriculum, introduction of Civic education at the upper basic level etc.

After the launching of the UBE and before it was given a legal backing in 2004, there was another global effort still geared towards ensuring that people of the world are educated. An agency of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) came up with 8 solid goals to address the developmental challenges of the world, by establishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Out of these goals, the goal number 2 of the MDGs also emphasizes the universalization of primary education.

### **Appraisal of UBE as a Phenomenon**

As can be seen from the objectives of the UBE, one needs no further explanation to believe in the capability of the programme to solve some, if not all our national educational and societal problems, but addressing contemporary challenges, thus; the specific objectives of

the UBE programme, as outlined in the implementation guidelines by Federal Ministry of Education (2000), Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) which are as follows:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- Provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system through improved relevance, equality and efficiency;
- Catering 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 and,
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, education, and ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

From the foregoing, the intent of UBE was to correct the various mistakes associated with the UPE and address the current educational needs of the Nigerian society, alas, the situation is characterised with a whole lot of messy manifestations. From Government, the public and the informed academic and researchers; the manifestations are:

- i. The launching of UBE was in 1999
- ii. The law backing its operation was passed in 2004
- iii. The Curriculum meant for the programme came out in 2007 and issued for use in 2008
- iv. Early Childhood Care and Development Education as a UBE component since 2013

The provisions of the Act include:

- Fine and imprisonment for the defaulting parents who deny children right to education (UBE)
- Provision of free mid-day meal to pupils/students at school
- Disarticulation principle requiring that no junior and senior secondary be situated in same environment and should have separate administration and infrastructures.

In the evaluation of the instrumentality of UBE's features and provisions above, a number of questions shall rhetorically be asked in its assessment for analysis. Firstly, item No. 5 of the 40 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which in itself is the Government's own statement as replicated below can probe further, thus:

**FAQ No. 5: When did UBE take-off effectively?**

UBE programme took-off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004.

However, the implementation started in earnest in July 2005 with the appropriation of the UBE fund to the Commission and subsequent disbursement to States.

**Assessment and Analysis:**

- If UBE was launched in 1999,
- the enabling law passed in 2004,
- implementation assumed to commence in 2005,

UBE was launched in 1999 and the law enabling it came in 2004, should it be concluded that all that took place from 1999 to 2004 and 2005 were nothing to be regarded as programme of UBE or the Government irresponsiveness?

**FAQ No. 24: When is the new curriculum going to be implemented?**

The new curriculum will begin to be implemented in September 2007, with only primary 1 and JSS1. The old Primary curriculum will be phased out by July 2013 and that of Junior Secondary School in July 2010.

- the curriculum came out in 2007
- ready and circulated for use in 2008.

**Assessment and Analysis:**

***UBE Curriculum***

- The question is - when was a child who entered school in 1999 expected to graduate and at graduation, which curriculum was he or she exposed to? Certainly, not UBE Curriculum.
- Also, it was even said that the old curriculum would be phased out completely in 2013. As stated in FAQs, Item No. 24 above.
- Another question is - what do we call education being received by the pupils and students under UBE programme from 1999 to 2008 and with the old curriculum in use till 2013? It clearly indicates that for more than a decade, supposedly products of UBE were being churned out without the designed curriculum for UBE scheme.

**UBE Act**

- Fine and imprisonment prescribed by the Act for the defaulting parents,
- The provision of free mid-day meal.

**Assessment and Analysis**

***Fines and Imprisonments***

- For the fines and imprisonments' prescription by the Act as the punishment for parents not sending their children to school,
- Has any parent been fined or jailed or is it that all children of school going age in Nigeria are in school?
- Another big question is that what becomes of the child or who takes care of the child, if the defaulting parent is serving jailed terms? This question is asked because the Act is silent about the fate of the child, while the parents are serving jail terms.
- The provision of mid-day meal as provided for in the Act is another big question. Where or in which school is the meal being provided today in Nigeria? It is true that some states briefly tried, but never last. It is indeed commendable that the current Government has taken the bull by the horns to resuscitate this and implementing it in phases, starting with about 9 to 13 states of the federation

**FAQ 31: How will UBE be implemented under the existing 6- year Secondary School arrangement?**

- Under the new UBE system, JSS should be separated from the SSS, and this is referred to as disarticulation. In other words, the two leaves should be run by two separated administrations and eventually have separate locations, infrastructures etc. the existing 6-years secondary education is in contradiction to the existing policy of 6-3-3-4 and is to be discontinued henceforth.

**FAQ 32: When did the policy on disarticulation come into effect?**

- In 2004 the National Council on Education agreed on a five year disarticulation plan. The disarticulation commenced in 2004 and is expected to be completed by 2009 by both public and private sector providers.

**Assessment and Analysis**

***Disarticulation Principle***

Under the new UBE system, JSS should be separated from the SSS, and this is referred to as disarticulation. In other words, the two levels are required by law, to be run by two separate administrations and eventually have separate locations, infrastructures etc. the existing 6-years secondary education is in contradiction to the existing policy of 6-3-3-4 and is to be discontinued henceforth.

Disarticulation principle as stated above interprets to mean that no junior secondary school should be found in the same premises of the senior secondary school; clearly indicating that there is no six continuous years of any named secondary schools. Questions therefore arise, thus:

- Is there any school in Nigeria where this aspect of the Act is complied with? Sounding very serious about this in the 40 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) item No. 31; that separate administration, different locations and separate infrastructures would characterize operations of junior secondary.
- Unfortunately too, disarticulation was considered not to be immediately possible; therefore a dateline of 2004 to 2009 was set for this to have been concluded, as stated in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) item No. 32.
- This is now 8 years after, disarticulation is still not visible anywhere, except for the distinguishing modifications in the uniform type worn by students of junior and senior classes, the style or partitioning of a premises accommodating both junior and senior secondary, using barbed wire demarcation, erecting wall divider; as well as structural differentiation of building section/blocks for junior and senior, but in the same premises.

Worthy of mention is the statement of Government that says ‘the Federal Government Colleges (FGCs) will become and exist only as Senior Secondary Schools. However, the existing JSS component will be gradually phased-out by July 2008’. Has this ever happened, even the Federal Government itself, through National Examinations Council (NECO) up till now still conducts Common Entrance Examinations for and admit students into Unity Schools from Junior Secondary Class One (JSS I)?

**Mid-Day Meal /School Feeding**

Feeding the school children in the UBE is a law captured in the 2004 Act as the provision of mid-day meal for school children. This aspect of the UBE Law never received the full blessings of the governments at Federal or State levels. Evident since the beginning of this scheme in Nigeria, a few State governments tried feeding the kids, but never lasted six months, except in Osun State where this was a bit sustained for a while till the Federal Government intervention.

Advent of the current Nigerian government led by Muhammadu Buhari came with it, a reintroduction of the free feeding programme in schools, as one of the administration’s social investment packages; covering 7 beneficiary states for the start, including Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Oyo, Osun, Ogun and Zamfara States with a release of N844.36 million

according to the Senior Special Assistant to Acting President Yemi Osinbajo, Mr. Laolu Akande; towards the commencement of its flagship of Homegrown School Feeding (HgSF) programme, with a total of 11,775 cooks already employed to prepare the meals in the beneficiary states. Table 1 below shows the breakdown Local farmers in these respective states produced the food prepared and served.

Table 1:

*A Breakdown of the Seven (7) States' School Feeding Programme Disbursement for 30 School Days*

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Beneficiary States</b>	<b>Total Funding Tranches</b>	<b>No. of Cooks/ Food Vendors</b>	<b>No. of Pupils</b>
1.	Anambra	N188.76 million	937 cooks	96,489
2.	Ebonyi	N115.22 million	1,466 cooks	164, 598
3.	Enugu	N67.24 million	1,128 cooks	96,064
4.	Ogun	N119.65 million	1381 cooks	170,927
5.	Osun	N92.43 million	2,688 cooks	142,193
6.	Oyo	N72.29 million	1,437 cooks	103, 269
7.	Zamfara	N188.77 million	2, 738 cooks	269, 665

**Source:** *Financial Nigeria, 2017 (Author's Tabulation).*

Currently, a report of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2017) on Home-grown School Feeding (HgSF) programme indicates that the number of beneficiary states has increased to nine (9) and so far, N3.7bn disbursed to feed 1,287,270 school children with a total of 14,574 cooks. Table 2 shows the progressing in the commitment of the Federal Government in effecting the feeding provision of the UBE Act.

Table 2:

*A Breakdown of the Nine (9) States' School Feeding Programme Disbursement So Far - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2017*

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Beneficiary States</b>	<b>Total Funding in Tranches</b>	<b>No. of Pupils Fed</b>
1.	Abia	N42,921,200 <i>so far</i>	61,316
2.	Anambra	N693,013,300 <i>in eight tranches</i>	103,742
3.	Delta	N63,366,100 <i>so far</i>	90,523
4.	Ebonyi	N344,633,100 <i>in three tranches</i>	163,137
5.	Enugu	N419,427,200 <i>in six tranches</i>	108,898
6.	Ogun	N880,055,400 <i>in seven tranches</i>	231,660
7.	Osun	N767,483,244 <i>in eight tranches</i>	151,438
8.	Oyo	N414, 708, 700 <i>in six tranches</i>	107,983
9.	Zamfara	N188,001,100 <i>so far</i>	268,573

**Source:** *FGN/ScanNews, 2017 (Author's Tabulation).*

If not for the reintroduction of this free school feeding, this aspect of UBE law would have perpetually faced non-implementation. However, the focus in the implementation of this still exempts the Upper Basic level of the UBE, that is, Junior Secondary School Students

### **Issue of Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE)**

Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) as a UBE component since 2013 is the kind of education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) given to children aged 0-4

years, situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 (pre-primary) are within the formal education sector.

### **Assessment and Analysis**

Government's intention for this level of education is predicated on smooth transition of the child from home to the school, inculcation of social, moral norms and values as well as their overall development.

- Education at this level (in daycare, crèche or at the pre-primary) is implemented with the 'interpretation' of the private providers and not how it was conceived by government
- Most private providers of pre-primary level of education are committed to fees charged than the services – no playground and other required play materials to achieve the goal of overall development of the child.
- On a year pre-primary, has this seen the light of the day for implementation, particularly in Nigerian public schools? Most Nigerian public primary schools have no provision for this, except under Governor Amaechi of Rivers State where the constructed Model Primary Schools made provision for these pre-primary sections in them.

Another important reason for this level of education is the provision of adequate care, supervision and security of the children while their parents are at work.

- Can this work in the case of all workers (public or private), when government is not a pragmatic player in education at this level and only the private providers in the business are charging high fees; not affordable for the targets?

### **2004 UBE Act and the Evolving Issues**

UBE has become a contemporary phenomenon that academic researchers in our higher institutions see as a research problem to study. Alas, these researchers (students - undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as researching academics) have consistently, widely and wrongly interpreted UBE and its features to mean what it is not. This misinterpretation as said is so widely peddled even to the extent of indigenous educational consultant to international organisations/agencies are reporting the same error for global consumption.

Importantly, there is need to highlight few areas where the errors are committed in connection to the UBE. They include the followings:

#### ***The Nomenclature:***

Nomenclature is one area that UBE has been bastardized, particularly by the proprietors of private primary and post-primary (Junior Secondary segments) schools. In other to be talk of the town, best among the equals and second to none; they have always labelled UBE as what it is not. Ridiculously, some government established primary and secondary schools have joined in this distortion; naming the classes and calling levels in their schools as Basic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9. The general public, even parents and guardians have also recognised and taken this - *hook, line and sinker*. This mistake is not unconnected to the wrong notion about UBE in relation to the 9 year period; wrongly conceived and interpreted in terms of number of years at each level, starting with 9years of basic education.

At this juncture, it must be noted that the 9-year duration only means 9 years continuous period for which government will take responsibility of providing free, universal and compulsory education to children of school going age in Nigeria. The 40 Frequently Asked Questions, item No. 34 provides a clear explanation of this. An appropriate and official classification, even if there is any need at all to classify UBE in levels, should be:

- Lower Basic (Primaries 1, 2 & 3).
- Middle Basic (Primaries 4, 5 & 6).
- Upper Basic (JSS 1, 2 & 3).

***System and Policy Recognition:***

Similarly, there is a disturbing and un-official alteration of the numeric representation of the Nigerian system of education from the 6-3-3-4 to an unwarranted and baseless 9-3-4; as if the Nigerian education policy has structurally changed. A lot of people have been misled with this 9-3-4 coding of Nigeria's system of education. On the internet, in journals, from experts presentations, textbook and atimes in the media discussions and documentaries; UBE has been wrongly interpreted, giving rise to the rampant 9-3-4 in several research reports and articles.

It is noteworthy, seeing this on the pages of books, on the internet or elsewhere does not mean that this information is correct. When any researcher or writer of 9-3-4 is asked to provide an authentic and verifiable source for the 9-3-4 used in his/her study, then it becomes an endless search for him/her in providing the proof; rather justifying their claims with the numeric total of year, which is 9years for which the UBE programme runs. It is good to emphasise that primary school remains primary school and for six years which has not changed. Also, secondary school is still for six (6) years of three (3) years junior and three (3) years senior secondary. Ultimately, the last four (4) years is for higher education. Clearly, the 40 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), items No. 6 gives a convincing and direct answer which makes 6-3-3-4 incontrovertible.

***Confusion in Referencing State UBE Law for UBE Act***

As an academic, so many works, particularly students' researches (thesis and dissertations) showed that provisions of the UBE Act are being misrepresented by referring to them as State laws. Researchers have manifested high level of confusion between the UBE Act and the various State UBE Laws. Referencing as State UBE Laws, the provisions of the UBE Act, 2004, carrying the 2004 date as well? Studies carried out by researchers, particularly the post-graduate theses and dissertations studying Rivers, Bayelsa, Imo, Anambra, Niger, Abia States etc. have been confused with the provisions of the Act.

FAQs, UBE Act and the National Policy on Education serve as refutations to the series of incorrect statements, arguments, positions and misconceptions that characterised UBE and studies on UBE as a concept, phenomenon, and particularly research studies in higher institutions of learning.

Ultimately, achieving the objectives of the UBE programme will depend largely, as noted by Federal Ministry of Education (2000) on the degree to which the following conditions are met and appropriate approaches developed to improve them, thus:

- ensuring proper data collection/accurate statistical analysis
- prudent management of education funds
- effective planning, monitoring and evaluation

- ensuring adequate funding
- providing enriched curricula
- providing adequate infrastructural facilities
- procurement of textbooks and other instructional materials
- taking proper care of teachers; their recruitment, education, training, retraining, motivation and other needs
- encouraging public enlightenment and social mobilization for full community involvement.

### **Conclusion**

How far have we gone with the UBE implementation in Nigeria, when children are still learning sitting on the bare floor, leaking classrooms roof tops, teachers not being motivated to do their job and appropriated funds diverted into other uses? Unfortunately, the UBE has been a victim of several neglect and dilemmas from the stakeholders, despite the existing laws; meant to curtail excesses and regulate the programme and the public's derogatory attribution to UBE. Also, the providers have dealt with UBE in nomenclature and operation; to enable them maximise profit and gain numbers in their enrolment by ascribing it cosmetic characteristics. Equally so, the academic researchers have also plagued it with misnomer and unofficial coding and much misrepresentations of actual facts. Ultimately, the Government has not helped matters, having on paper beautifully enshrined policy, laws and strategies that are yet to be practically and committedly implemented.

The concern of this writer as a specialist in educational history and policy is, as much as possible, to sensitize the practitioners (educationists), general public by a way of contributing to existing knowledge about UBE; ending the unfortunate manifestations and providing correct information which will enrich the body of available facts on the issue of UBE and other related educational and policy matters in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Demonstrating sincere commitment in the implementation of the policy document (National Policy on Education) and enforcement of the Act of UBE will go a long way to solving the enormous problems identified and discussed in this paper.

Researchers in higher educational institutions should as much as possible not only to explore and present facts, but also evaluate the data before them to ensure authenticity, accuracy and consistency; as it is believed that the public and other academics will source from exiting body of knowledge while reviewing literature or analysing data.

The UBE service providers are also expected to play by the rules, rather than considering and placing maximisation of profit above the laid down rules. The UBE providers, particularly the private proprietors of schools should throw overboard, the introduction of cosmetic characteristics into the education being provided in the name of UBE; for their markets to sell. There is nothing like 'Basic 1 – 9' and there is nothing like '9 – 3 - 4'

Finally, if the introduction or the launch of UBE in Nigeria is on one side to correct all the past mistakes and on the other hand, respond to the global best practices; then everyone, including Government should do everything possible not to repeat the history of our past inadequacies. This is by getting things right and not bringing back what led to the previous disappointments or engineering the emergence of new problems that will further worsen the situation. The policies, the laws and guidelines are clearly (in concept and context) enshrined to guide the practice, therefore, should be followed

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