

## ***Administration of Basic Education for Good Governance in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects***

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### **Abstract**

*Around the globe, education has been regarded as the instrument par excellence for the development of individual, a country and for good governance. For the contemporary society to be developed and maintained democracy devoid of rancour, the necessary moral conduct (norms, ethical values, moral values, civic obligations and the rights of the citizens) needs to be inculcated in the young people who are the future leaders. At Basic Education level, elements of good governance and anti-corruption practices are being imparted into the learners. Basic Education is the cradle for the development of the total person to be knowledgeable, useful, skillful, entrepreneurially oriented, employable, relevant and patriotic as well as being productive to himself or herself and to the nation in general. Teaching of transparency, equity, cooperative tendency, values for political participation and accountability to control corruption, are crucial functions of Basic Education. This article therefore focused on the historical perspective of Basic Education, the conceptual definitions of Basic Education, objectives of Basic Education, conceptual clarifications of administration, administration of Basic Education, challenges in the administration of Basic Education and prospects of Basic Education. Conclusion was drawn and some recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Administration, Basic, education, Good, governance, problems, prospects.

### **Introduction**

Education is the foundation for the growth and development of an economy. The level of a country's advancement is a function of the standard of education of the country. Bassey, Ekpoh and Edet (2008) opined that education at any level is a potential tool for all round development of an individual and a nation in general. Education is a crucial tool in political, social, economic, cultural, technological and entrepreneurial advancement of a country. There has always been a nexus between education and good governance. In this context, good governance is simply the way in which a country is

governed and controlled to enhance protection of lives and properties, maintenance of internal peace, promotion of economic growth and development, maintenance of law and order, protection of civil liberties, poverty alleviation, provision of employment opportunities, control of the trends of inflation, deflation and recession to mention a few. Simply put, good governance is an effective exercise of power in the administration of a country. Education enhances the development of individual to be sound and morally upright in the affairs of governance. It is common knowledge that the success and failure of educational system depend, to a large extent, on its administration.

The inevitable role of education in a country requires for its effective and efficient administration at all levels, if it is meant to achieve its goals and objectives. In considering the importance of education to nation building and good governance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008) stated that, education is an instrument for national development, social change and a vital tool for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria. Lawal, Viatanu and Ekundayo (2008) stated that when the citizens are well informed and enlightened, they can be easily mobilized in support of government policies and operations and can as well be relied upon for national reform initiatives, when there is need as opposed to being indifferent and uncooperative. Education is the vital tool for citizens' enlightenment. The various levels of education in Nigeria include basic education, post-basic education and the tertiary education levels.

Specifically, basic education which is the focus of this paper is education given to children aged 0-15 years. It is regarded as the foundation upon which other levels of education are built and relied upon for the production of manpower (human capital). It is a pre-condition for the success of other levels of education. Arguably, basic education is the fundamental and inevitable tool for informing and enlightening citizens for a nation's good governance. It is on the ground of this understanding that the provision and administration of basic education upon which other levels of education depend becomes apt for the promotion of good governance in the country.

### **The historical perspective of basic education**

In Nigeria, the metamorphosis of Universal Primary Education (UPE) is what is now known as Universal Basic Education (UBE). Retrospectively, different forms of free and compulsory education programmes were introduced and implemented at various times in Nigeria. For instance, UPE was introduced in 1955 in the then Western Region of Nigeria. It was exclusively meant for all children in the Western Region. The development took place during Action Group (AG) government under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and S. C. Awokoya as the Minister of Education. According to Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (as cited in Anuna & Okorie, 2008), the

introduction of UPE in the then Western Region was an important milestone in educational development in Nigeria. It resulted in increase in primary school enrolment, increase in the number of primary school teachers and increase in budget for education. Following the political pressure in the then Eastern Region in Nigeria, the leader of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose Minister of Education was I. U. Akpabio, introduced UPE programme in 1957 (Anuna & Okorie, 2008). During the aforementioned periods, UPE was controlled by the regional governments and as such, it was a regional programme and there was no Federal Government intervention.

For the purpose of equality and unlimited access to education, in 1976, UPE was inaugurated by the then Military Head of States, General Olusegun Obasanjo, to ensure that free education opportunities reached the entire citizens of Nigeria who are of school-going age irrespective of the region. As commendable as UPE was, Bassey (2017) noted that the scheme suffered multiple setbacks under both the regional governments and the federal military government (General Olusegun Obasanjo's regime). The lapses which made the realization of the objectives of the scheme to fail, according to Igwe and Fafunwa (as cited in Bassey, 2017), include insufficient funding, limited infrastructures and equipment, poor management, uncooperative attitude of voluntary agencies, inadequate number of qualified teaching staff, poor specification of stakeholders like parents, communities, to mention a few. Corroborating this, Anuna and Okorie (2008) stated that the implementation of UPE in 1976 suffered from poor planning, inconsistencies and dwindling financial resources among others. These setbacks slowed down the successful implementation of the scheme throughout the nation.

It should be noted that Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria is a modified version of Universal Primary Education (UPE). It was in 1999 that UPE metamorphosed into Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme. The Scheme was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999 in Sokoto by President Olusegun Obasanjo under a democratic government. Apart from being universal and free, UBE was launched to be compulsory for nursery school, primary school, junior secondary school and for those who have dropped out from school. In addition, the scheme was launched to reflect Nigeria's commitment to the world's declaration on Education For All (EFA) in Jomtien World Conference of 1990 and as well as implementing the United Nations Organization's (UNO) declaration of fundamental human rights that every child has the right to education and that education shall be free and compulsory. In an attempt to achieve the goals of ill-fated UPE Scheme, Bassey (2017) opined that, the present UBE Scheme was formally launched in line with the constitutional provision of section 18 that the government shall as and when practicable provide free, compulsory and Universal Primary Education, free adult literacy programme among

others to its citizens as a means of eradicating illiteracy in the country as well as free secondary education.

### **Conceptual definitions of Basic Education**

Basic education is that minimum requirement for proper adaptation to one's society (Ocho, 2005). According to Nwana (as cited in Egwu, 2008), basic education is fundamental, foundation or bottom line education upon which every other education whether formal or non-formal are built and without which no other educational structure succeeds. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008) defined Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme as the type of education that is designed for children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the early childhood education (0-5) and 9 years of formal schooling. The formal schooling is obtainable in six years in primary school and three years in junior secondary school (first three years in secondary school).

According to Iheonunekwu, Uche-Obasi and Nwambara (2008), the Jomtien 1990 Declaration and framework of Action on Education For All (EFA) detailed Basic Education as not a package but a process, not a question of years of formal education but a question of acquisition of skills, a foundation level that emphasizes literacy, numeracy, basic life skills and learning-to-learn-skills, emphasizes on learning, de-emphasizing repetition and dropouts and essential part of broad-based policy on inclusive education. In this paper, Basic Education as the name implies is the fundamental level of education that is most necessary and from which other levels of education are developed. It is the foundation that determines the strength of individual's knowledge, attitudes, values and literacy, numeracy, reading and employability skills. As one of the agents of socialization, Basic Education is geared towards instilling acceptable values and norms into the learners to shun corrupt practices both in the school system in particular and the society in general, as well as being law abiding at all times.

### **Objectives of Basic Education**

The Universal Basic Education was launched with the following objectives:

1. to develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. to provide free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
3. to reduce the incidence of pupils leaving school early from the formal system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency.
4. to cater through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling.

5. to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning (The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008).

Specifically, the same document stated that the goals of Basic Education are to:

1. provide the child with diverse basic skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement.
2. develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities.
3. inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour.
4. inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, ethnic and socio-economic background.
5. provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

The objectives of Basic Education have the undertone of providing and preparing the citizenry to take active part in democratic processes for the promotion of good governance in the country. Hence, its effective administration becomes necessary.

### **Administration: Conceptual clarifications**

The role of administration in every organization cannot be over-emphasized since it is the doing function of organizational administrators. Administration is the process of organizing available resources in an organization towards the achievement of the desired goals and objectives for which an organization was established. Educational programme at any level is established for the achievement of specific objectives. For these objectives to be achieved, available human, material, time and financial resources need to be effectively and efficiently allocated, distributed, utilized and maintained. Isah and Unachukwu (2014) conceptualized administration as the judicious use of resources in the school system that has to do with allocation, availability, distribution and utilization. Administration is a social process which is concerned with identifying, motivating, controlling and unifying formally and informally human and material resources within an integrated system designed specifically to accomplish predetermined goals (Okorji & Unachukwu, 2014). Thus, administration involves getting things done in an organization through effective mobilization of available human, material and financial resources. As a process and practice, institutional administrators initiate ideas, direct organizational programmes and activities, control, supervise and monitor all resources and carefully use them to achieve organization goals.

The existence of educational institutions and programmes are the reasons for educational administration. Educational administration covers all programmes and activities in educational institutions. It is the prudent management of available educational resources for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Okorji and Unachukwu (2014) identified the main objectives of educational administration to include among others execution of plan, directing line of actions, supervising what is to be done, advising on the proper way to work, stimulating work efficiency, exploring new approaches and leading learners' activities. Administration of educational programmes is the policies implementation function of controlling available material and financial resources as well as directing human efforts to execute formulated major educational policies and goals.

### **Administration of Basic education**

The goals and objectives of educational programmes are attained when available resources are effectively and efficiently harnessed. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008) stated that administrative services in education include provision of efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system; quality assurance through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services and machinery for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Policy on Education provision. In the context of this work, administration of basic education is focused on administration of curriculum, staff personnel administration, pupils'/students' personnel administration, administration of school plant and administration of school community-relations.

### **Administration of curriculum**

Curriculum in this context is an embodiment of all educational programmes/activities consciously designed and directed towards enabling learners to acquire basic skills, knowledge, competencies and to be self-reliance in order to be able to function effectively and contribute meaningfully to the society. Curriculum administration has over time been considered as part and parcel of administrative responsibility. It is the administrative duty to ensure that curriculum contents are implemented by the teachers. Availability, utilization and maintenance of teaching materials, teachers' commitment, use of suitable methodology, supervision, inspection, evaluation of instructions among others are factors that enhance effective curriculum administration. Okorji and Unachukwu (2014) stated that relevant curriculum must be well administered, and taking into account problems, aspirations and challenges of both the learners and society.

### **Staff personnel administration**

Teachers' role towards the development of individual into morally, sound and patriotic citizens cannot be over-emphasized. According to Iloabuchi, Abraham and Afangideh (2016), teachers engineer the minds and attitudes of learners for socio-economic development and nation building. The crucial jobs perform by teachers calls for effective staff personnel administration. Their deployment needs to be on the basis of specialization, to promote productivity and better outcome of pupils/students. School administrators have the role of encouraging teachers' career development and welfare for optimum performance.

### **Pupils/students personnel administration**

Administrative and supervisory functions and services rendered to learners to complement the usual classroom teaching and learning constitute pupils/students administration. These services include, among others, admission, registration, guidance and counselling, library services, health services, recreational services. At the basic level of education, the necessary services needed by the learners to complement their educational advancement should not be undermined by school administrators. Nkang (2002) reported that it is the duty of the school head to make sure that the programme of instruction given to the students makes adequate provision for the varying interests, aptitudes and abilities of the students and should be directed towards achieving educational goals and national objectives.

### **Administration of school plant**

Educational programmes at any level cannot be implemented without school plant. These are buildings, equipment, machines, playground, football field, flowers, school garden, farm and every physical item that facilitate teaching, learning and out of classroom activities. Effectiveness of the educational organization in respect of assisting in implementing educational programmes, meeting the needs of the pupils/students and staff in the school as well as improving students' academic performance and achievement, is contingent upon the nature of the school plant. Nwagwu (as cited in Asiegbu, 2014) observed that the quality of education that a child receives is directly related to the availability or lack of physical facilities and the overall atmosphere in which teaching and learning take place. This is in agreement with Akpan (2011) who maintained that school physical facilities are of great functional value to teaching and learning in the school and as such, careful and efficient management of these facilities is needed. The author further stressed that availability and prudent management of school facilities determine greatly, the quality of instruction and performance of students in the school.

Administration of school plant involves actions geared towards building, renovating, supplying, maintaining, utilizing and replacing school facilities based on the needs as

well as ensuring that they are always functional for educational programmes. To a very large extent, the quality of education students receive is dependent upon physical facilities. Agi and Eremie (2018) are of the view that at the basic education level, the physical facilities contribute to the quality education delivery as well as determining the quality of output for a nation's growth and sustenance. The administration of available facilities is a major variable for measuring the successful implementation of any educational programme (Lawanson & Gede, 2011). The school administrators need to ensure that educational facilities are available, well utilized, maintained and replaced when need arises so as to boost staff and pupils'/students' morale.

### **Administration of school and community-relations**

The dynamic nature of the society demands the school administration to ensure that the total learning experiences are designed such that they reflect the needs of the society. Agi and Eremie (2018) averred that school administration should identify the change in the community, assess the curriculum, see areas that need adjustment, get teachers to adjust teaching contents and get the school to review schools' improvement plans and strategies. Parents Teachers Association which is a crucial component of school community relations should be sustained effectively and involved in school decision-making processes.

### **Challenges in the administration of Basic Education**

Challenges in the administration of Basic Education in Nigeria abound. These is evidenced in poor curriculum administration and implementation, inadequate human and material resources, problem of facilities management, poor monitoring of the scheme, utilization of unqualified teachers to teach at basic education level, poor staff motivation, inadequate funding, misappropriation of available funds by the stakeholders of the programme, poor instructional supervision among others.

### **Prospects of Administration of Basic Education**

Basic education forms the foundation upon which other levels of education are built. It instills literacy and numeracy into learners as well as providing the basic skills needed for life-long learning. The development of individuals to acquire acceptable values and norms to be morally upright in the affairs of governance starts from basic education.

### **Conclusion**

Basic education is a sine qua non for the promotion of good governance and a tool for anti-corruption practices as it instills the norms, values and attitudes crucial to democracy in the learners. The students are the future leaders who will be responsible for controlling the country after the government of the day. Administration of basic education is predicated upon effective administration of curriculum, staff personnel

administration, pupils/students personnel administration, administration of school plant and administration of school community-relations. Its objectives in terms of ensuring acquisition of literacy, numeracy, communicative and skills as well as ethical, moral and civic values for the learners are approaches towards good governance and anti-corruption practices.

### **Recommendations**

In order to succeed in the administration of basic education for good governance in Nigeria, it is recommended that:

1. School administrators should encourage the implementation of the basic education scheme. They should ensure that teachers are not relenting in the discharge of their duties. This can be feasible through regular classroom monitoring and supervision.
2. Educational administrators should ensure that available facilities are well utilized and maintained for the achievement of educational goals and objectives.
3. Professional and qualified teachers at each level of basic education should be engaged in teaching in schools.
4. School administrators should adopt transformational leadership style in school so that teachers can perform their job maximally.
5. Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized from time to time for the school administrators and teachers on the importance of basic education for good governance.
6. The annual budget allocation to educational sector should be improved by Federal Government. This is because over the years the percentage of budget allocation to education is not up to a half of 26% recommendation of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
7. Every state government, through the Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Education, should intensify efforts on the inspection and monitoring of Basic Education in all schools.

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