

## MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSIFICATION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: IMPLICATION FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN NIGERIA

---

**Johnson Agbonavbare Osaigbovo**

---

*Department of Education  
Faculty of Arts & Education Benson Idahosa University  
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria  
E-mail: [drjaosaigbovo@yahoo.com](mailto:drjaosaigbovo@yahoo.com), [drjaosaigbovo@gmail.com](mailto:drjaosaigbovo@gmail.com)*

### ABSTRACT

*Primary education is very important in Nigerian education system. Since, independence in 1960, the federal, state and local governments have played significant role in the management and administration of primary education level in Nigeria. The introductions of Universal Primary Education (UPE) Scheme (1976) by the then regional governments and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 by the federal government in the country have helped to diversified primary education. The management of primary education in Nigeria has been moving from one body to another. However, the reintroduction of the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) through decree No. 96 of 1993, along with the structure of State Primary Education Board (SPEB) and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA), make these bodies responsible for the management and fund allocation in the primary level. The paper focused on management of diversification of Nigerian education and its implications for primary education level in Nigeria. It was recommended that there should be regular training and retraining of staff to ensure availability of capable human resources to manage the diversification of primary education level in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Management, Diversification, Nigerian Education, Primary Education Level.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Johnson Agbonavbare Osaigbovo (2014), Management of Diversification in Nigerian Education: Implication for Primary Education Level in Nigeria. *J. of Education and Leadership Development* Vol. 6, No. 2, Pp. 105 – 113.

---

### Introduction

Primary education is very important in the Nigerian education system. It is the oldest system. Its history, in the geographical entity that is now known as Nigeria, dates back to 172 years ago, precisely 1842. It is 172 years, about 17 decades and at least a century older than secondary education, the Higher College, Yaba, the first known institution of higher learning, whose all departments were sited at one location and pre-primary education, respectively. Also, no other level comes close to primary education in terms of clientele. As at December 1996, there were 48,242 primary schools. Total 16,761,591 pupils attended these schools. Total 14,796,074 of them

were in government or public institutions and the rest, 1,965,517, were in private schools (Oni, 2009). By 2003, the number of primary schools had increased to 74,982 (The Universal Basic Education Commission, 2005). In addition, primary education is the only link between pre-primary education and secondary education systems. It takes in successful beneficiaries of the former and supplies entrants into the latter. But more importantly, it is generally regarded as the very foundation upon which the other strata of the educational edifice are built (Oni, 2009). Granted that pre-primary education is a level below primary education, it is not considered as the foundation. This is because pre-primary education is available only in big towns and enjoyed by few children whose parents could afford the high fees and other charges demanded by the private proprietors. Besides, primary education is the first level of the nation 6-3-3-4 education system that is, 6, 3, 3 and 4 years of primary education, junior secondary education, senior secondary education and university education, respectively. Primary education, in the Nigerian education system, is very old, has the highest patronage and occupies a very important position. It demands effective and efficient management of its diversification at the primary level.

### **Education Management**

The importance of management and administration of education cannot be over emphasized. This is because education stands in as bedrock of development of the nation (Imadenaje, 2008). The educational system cannot be effective when the managerial ability is so poor. Schulez and Zublitaky (1982) defined management as a set of functions and activities to be used in the management of human resources in a fair, affirmative and efficient manner for the benefit of the organization, the individual and the society in a given organization and even in education generally. While Peretomode (1995) defined human resources management in education as not only effective utilization of people per se but in the harnessing of the totality of the people's skills, energies, talents, latent capacities, social characteristics like belief to achieve educational objectives and simultaneously making the people be part and parcel of organization in fulfilling their life goals. It is the systematic utilization of human potential to realize educational objectives and staff contentment. Education management comprises of planning, coordinating, commanding, communicating, budgeting, and controlling with specific activities of recruitment, selection, orientation, staff development etc. which it carries out in order to achieve the objectives of education. In Nigeria, the responsibility of management of primary education level is shared among the three tiers of government (NPE, 2004).

### **Primary Education in Nigeria**

Primary education as referred in the National Policy on Education (2004) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure

of the whole system. The duration shall be six years. This being the case, the goals of primary education are to:

- a. Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
- b. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- c. Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- d. Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- e. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- f. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity;
- g. Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

These goals formed the basis of primary education level in Nigeria. It is free and compulsory.

### **Diversification of Primary Education**

The diversification of primary education in Nigeria has been on the increase because education has received great attention right from the time of the missionaries through the colonial government to the present day. For instance, the ten year plan of 1942-53 made adequate provision for the extension of primary education facilities and primary education was provided in the villages with a strong bias suited to the local needs of the people. As a result, there was nearly fifty per cent increase in the number of primary schools and enrolment in them. The introduction of universal primary education (UPE) scheme by the then regional governments in the country also helped to diversify primary education. Consequently, there was great increase in the number of schools and enrolments in them. For example in Western Region the school enrolment rose from 400,000 in 1955 to 982,755 in 1957 and in the Eastern Region it rose from 566,000 in 1956 to 1.3 million in 1957. About 176,904 children were attending primary schools in the Northern Nigeria (NPEC, 1999). It must, however, be mentioned that there were lots of problems that stemmed from the introduction of the UPE Scheme in the 1950s. These included among others: educational imbalance in the country; acute shortage of qualified teachers; recruitment of unqualified and untrained people into teaching; inadequate management staff to coordinate efforts in the implementation exercise; and inadequate curriculum materials and funds to run the scheme.

Consequently, the scheme collapsed in the Eastern Region and school fees were reintroduced. Prior to 1960, there was no uniformity in the length of time pupils had to spend at primary level. There was no centralized system of examination for the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) in the country. Indeed, each of the 12 states

created in 1967, was responsible for their own primary school education and examination. There was no national policy that guided educational practices in Nigeria at the time. The curriculum was not changed until after the 1969 National Curriculum Conference and the formulation of the national policy on education. Government's keen interest in education in 1970s brought about many changes in the educational system at the primary level in the country. For example, there was uniform duration of studies at the primary school level. There was a National Seminar in 1973 which led to the formulation of National Policy on Education in 1977 revised in 1981. From this period onwards, there has been steady development in educational system in general and at primary level in particular. The policy specified the number of years for each level of education and the type of examination. The 6-3-3-4 system of education came as a result of this policy. The Federal Government, in its effort to make education accessible to all school-age children in the country, introduced universal primary education in 1976. This scheme attracted many children to primary schools which resulted in explosive enrolment in primary schools. For instance, primary school enrolment rose from 3,515,827 pupils in 1970 to 11,276,270 in 1988. The number of primary schools grew from 35,433 in 1991 to 38,649 in 1995. The enrolment in primary schools in Nigeria which was 13,607,249 in 1991 also grew to 16,190,947 in 1994 (Federal Office of Statistics). It must be noted that about fifty six per cent of the total number of pupils in primary schools are boys while girls constitute forty four per cent (National Primary Education Commission, 1999). Eighty per cent of the primary schools are located in the rural areas with inadequate infrastructural facilities and most of them have no library facilities.

In relation to instructional materials and teaching staff, the story is the same throughout the country, It has been observed by NPEC (1999) that instructional materials are grossly inadequate and that less than forty per cent of pupils have basic textbooks and writing materials. The teaching staff situation is improving in quantity and quality as more teachers are being trained. The number of unqualified teachers in the system at this level has dropped from over fifty per cent in 1989 to six per cent in 1997 in the south and forty two per cent in the north. For the entire country, 23.8% unqualified teachers are still found in the primary schools. The management of primary education in Nigeria has been moving from one body to another. The federal government is the principal financier and controller of primary education. However, the reintroduction of the National Primary Education Commission through Decree No. 96 of 1993, along with the structure of State Primary Education Board (SPEB) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), make these bodies responsible for the management and fund allocation in the primary school level. This was previously managed by the local government councils. The new administration has however discharged the National Primary Education Commission from this responsibility in 1999. Sequel to this, it must be said that the primary education curriculum is richer and more elaborate than what it was in the 1960s and 1970s. The mode of

instruction has also changed and pupils are being taught basic things around their environment. The federal government has introduced Universal Basic Education (UBE) in an attempt to make education accessible and to make all citizens literate by the year 2015.

### **Management of Diversification at the Primary Education Level in Nigeria**

Primary education in Nigeria has passed through different times. In the formative period, 1842- 1882, the system was in the hands of the various Christian missions. During the time, the teaching staff comprised the missionary, his wife and other employee(s). No consideration was paid at teacher quality. There was no barrier, whatsoever, to admission of students either. Imparting and acquisition of knowledge took place in the same building used for religious service (Oni, 2009). The different missions did not have a common syllabus. The subjects taught were: the 3Rs that is, reading, writing and arithmetic. If a female teacher was available, needlework could be added to the list. Due to the obvious inadequacies, the system was below the mark. The colonial masters came up the stage between 1882 and 1940's. Through the whole course of the time, the government put in place rules and regulations, codified into ordinances and codes, essentially to direct the actions of all and sundry connected with the education system. The first Education Ordinance, enacted in 1882, made it possible for the state to provide financial assistance and maintenance for the schools (The Education Ordinance for the Gold Coast Colony, 1882) each of the other ordinances and codes was a big improvement on the one before it.

Admittedly, there was a relative improvement, when a comparison of situation is made between missionary era and the colonial period, the performance of the system was still nothing to write home about. In 1920, the Phelps-Stokes Funds of United States of America and the International Education Board set up a commission to study education in West South and Equatorial Africa. In 1922, it published a report entitled: Education in Africa. Members of the commission revealed this stark truth: The record of the Colonial Government in Africa is a mixture of the good and the bad, the effective and the ineffective, the wise and the unwise (Lewis, 1962 in Oni, 2009). Between 1954 and 1960, the regional governments were, to a very large extent, self-governing. Each regional government made laws essentially to regulate the primary education system. The Western and Eastern Regional Governments, for instance, enacted laws, among other things, for the free, Universal Primary Education (UPE) schemes launched in 1955 and 1957, respectively. In spite of the efforts made so far, primary education remained a system of low quality. At the eve of independence, the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria popularly referred to as Ashby (1960) Commission; found that the command of English Language in the primary education system was much below the usual standard. Equally, the teaching workforce was of poor quality (Ashby, 1960 in Oni, 2009)

Since, independence, primary education has, for most of the times, been placed in the concurrent legislative list. Both the federal government and the state government have the right to manage it. As regards the third tier of government, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979) clearly states: the functions of a Local Government Council shall include participation of such Council in the government of a State as respects the provision and maintenance of primary education. Upon the attainment of independence in 1960, there was the call for outright rejection of the education legacy of the former British overlords. According to Fafunwa (1982): The educational system should meet the yearnings and aspirations of the nation. Towards accomplishing just that, there was the need to re-appraise its goals, objectives and content. This was the reason for holding the National Conference on Curriculum Development at Lagos in September 1969. The central message of the conference was the promotion of national consciousness and self-reliance via educational training. About 8 years after the conference, precisely 1977, a National Policy on Education was produced. The document had been revised in 1981, 1989 and 2004. Altogether, the 61-page policy document has thirteen sections. The fourth section is on primary education (NPE, 2004). Primary education, a 6-year programme, is for children whose ages range between 6 and 11 years. It is provided in institutions of learning. It was made free, universal and compulsory throughout the country with effect from September 1976. In 1999, that is, 23 years after the launching of the Universal Primary Education scheme, primary education was made an integral part of a 9-year basic education programme. Five years later, precisely March 18, 2004, the National Assembly passed the Universal Basic Education Bill. It was signed into law by the President two months afterwards. Clearly, the last one decade or so has witnessed great involvement of the governments in the management of primary education system. The federal government has the Federal Ministry of Education. This Ministry has the Department of Primary and Secondary Education. Besides, there is Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). At the state government level, there is a Ministry of Education having a Department that has oversight function over primary education. In addition, there is Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB). At the local government level there are: the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and the District Education Committee (DEC). All these agencies are put in place for the purpose of management and administration of diversification at the primary education level in Nigeria.

### **Importance of Management of Diversification at the Primary Education Level in Nigeria**

1. It guarantees realization of positive result, that is, in achieving the goals of primary education level in Nigeria.
2. It enhances qualitative education which brings about high standard of education.

3. Good management and funding will enhance students/pupils enrolment in schools.
4. It serves as a frame work in which implementation is based on.
5. It creates improved opportunities for the managers.
6. Government policies on education Like Universal Basic Education Programme could easily be realized, when there is proper management and funding
7. It also allows for improvement of social infrastructures needed for teaching/learning in schools.
8. Management and funding assist in correction of mistakes of the past years on misappropriation of effective supervision.
9. Management and funding also assist in development of staff and the educational system
10. It enables the educational managers and administrators to identify the pitfalls in the Universal Basic Education through seminars workshops and conferences.
11. It ensures unnecessary diversion of funds and facilities meant for education.

The responsibility for implementing the current UBE Programme has been effectively decentralized; all the tiers of government are involved unlike the previous programme. Communities, parents, teachers, private sectors, NGOs and public spirited individuals and organizations - are not left out. Notwithstanding the collective efforts, government should be determined to control and supervise its successful implementation.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria, regarded, as giant of Africa not only because of its large population, but also because of its enormous materials resources should pay more attention on education, especially at the primary level. The country is blessed with talented men and women whose capacity could be maximized through education. Attention should therefore, be focused on education at every level that would ensure rapid industrial growth, poverty alleviation, political stability and lasting democracy. Students from the primary to the university should be well prepared to earn their living without depending on the government for employment. Vocational and Technical Education should be introduced and emphasized at both primary and secondary levels to prepare the youths for the challenges of the millennium. Sequel to this, all efforts must be made to ensure that inspectorate division of Federal Ministry of Education, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and of course the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) are all provided with both human and material resources to function effectively in order to realized the goals of primary education for Nigeria child.

## Recommendations

In order to ensure the success of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria especially at the primary education level, the following recommendations are made:

- There must be regular training and retraining of staff which will ensure available and capable human resources to manage the diversification of primary education level in Nigeria.
- Local communities should be fully mobilized to support the management of diversification of primary education as this will help to restore public confidence. The office of the National Orientation Agency in each state of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) should come up with a blueprint that would help to ensure effective service delivery along this line. The major language in each state should be used in the processes of an awareness campaign and this will help to ensure that the messages are well received by all the various communities that make up the country.
- The structure of state primary education boards should be allowed to continue with the chairman being Executive. The innovation of some SPEBs by creating zonal coordinating office for quality control, material development as well as resources mobilization has proved to be rewarding and should therefore be sustained.
- At the local government educational authority (LGEA) level, the position of the LGEA education committee chairman should be occupied by the local government chairmans himself or the incumbent councilor for education. This arrangement will keep the local government chairman abreast of education activities or programmes in his area of jurisdiction.

## References

- Ali-Momoh, B.O. & Ibhafidon – Momodu, G.O. (2010). Education issues and Understanding Through Planning a Result Oriented Universal Basic Education in Nigeria (UBE). *Journal of Academics*, 5(1), 86 – 89.
- Fafunwa, A.B. (1982). *History of Education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council Press.
- Imadenaje, U.E. (2008). Management and Funding of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State. In C.Maduka and O.A. Afemikhe (eds), *Issues in Education, Government and Development*. Benin City: Institute of Education, University of Benin, Benin City.



National Primary Education Commission (1999). *Expansion of Primary Education*.

Retrieved on 23/08/2014 from

<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/links/eduadv.asp?blurb+538#ix223B6ilurul>

Oni, J.O. (2009). Management of Primary Education in Nigeria: Trends, Constraints and Solutions. *The Social Sciences*, 4 (3), 286 – 290.

Peretomode, V.F. (1995). *Introduction to Educational Administration in Nigeria*. Owerri: Pon Publishers Limited.

Schuler, R.S. & Zubritzky, A. (1982). Personnel and Human Research, Management Research, Practice and Teaching: An Applied Approach in R.D. Freedman (ed), *Management Education Issues in Theory Research and Practice*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Publisher.

Universal Basic Education (2005). *UBEC 2005 Annual Report*. Abuja: Universal Basic Education Press.