



Review

Over view of the progress and challenges of education for all in Nigeria

*S. N. Aja, P.I. Eze and Eke Nick

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's E-mail: saja4net@gmail.com

Abstract

The work examined the progress and challenges of Education For All (EFA) in Nigeria against the backdrop of how far the EFA goals have been achieved. Despite the enormous progress recorded so far by the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria, it was observed that the possibility of achieving the six EFA goals in Nigeria by 2015 is not feasible. The problems militating against the realization of EFA goals in Nigeria among other things include the fact that the provision of early childhood or pre-school education is largely undertaken by private individuals or organization. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was not actually performing on its mandate because of the harsh economic realities of parents which have forced many school age children out of school in search of means of livelihood through hawking or other menial jobs. Not until the new and expanded UBE curriculum become fully operational, the present curriculum does not adequately cater for the learning needs of the youths and adults as evidenced by the high rate of unemployment in the country. The quality of the Universal Basic Education is impaired by the near absence of educational resources especially in the rural communities. It is based on these observable problems that the following recommendations were made for a way forward: Adequate funding of education, provision of more educational resources, effective implementation of the new UBE curriculum and realistic planning, regular monitoring and supervision of schools/instructional programmes, effective Guidance and Counseling services in school and moral instruction for positive attitudinal change among school staff and students. Above all Education For All is the responsibility of all citizens. If everybody does what he or she is expected to do patriotically, the goals of EFA will be achieved in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education For All (EFA), Progress and Challenges in Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Education For All (EFA) is a global initiative on education launched in Jomtiem, Thailand in 1990 to guarantee universal basic education to every citizen irrespective of nationality, race, sex, age, status or disabilities. Oruwari (2012), noted the education for All (EFA) through the universal basic education (UBE) programme in Nigeria is aimed at universalizing access to education and thereby reducing drastically the incidence of mass illiteracy in the world over. UBE as a government intervention for the actualization of EFA is also related to millennium development Goals (MDGS) and one of the strategies for realizing the nation's economic agenda as enunciated

by National Economic Empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS). EFA as an international movement was championed by united Nations Education, Scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank aiming at meeting the learning needs and to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults by 2015. At the 1990 world conference on education for All in Jomtiem, a declaration on education for all was adopted which stresses that education is a fundamental human right and therefore enjoined participating countries to strengthen their effort to improve education in order to

ensure the basic learning needs for all were met. The framework for action on EFA to meet the basic learning needs articulated the following six goals for the year 2000.

1. Universal access to learning
2. A focus on equity
3. Emphasis on learning
4. Broadening the means and the scope of basic education
5. Enhancing the environment for learning
6. Strengthening partners by 2000.

In 2000 at the world Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal organized to take stock of the extent various countries of the world have reached the EFA goals stated above. The forum observe that many countries have not met up with the EFA goals and therefore agreed on a more proactive framework aimed at achieving the following goals:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstance and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 with focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education and of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

It is against the backdrop of six goals enshrined in the Dakar Framework for action on Education for all as a measure towards meeting the global commitment to universal basic education in the world over that the progress made so far in Nigeria and challenges to effective realization of EFA goals, need to be critically examined.

Goal 1: Expanding Early Childhood Care and Education

Early childhood education include the type of education given in an educational institution to children aged three to five years plus, prior to their entry the primary school (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004). In other words, it is normally referred to as pre-school education. Although the National policy on education in Nigeria

specifies the minimum standards for establishing pre-primary school, the operators of these schools are mostly private individuals, voluntary organizations and churches. Corroborating this assertion, Azukaego (2012) noted that there was no uniform curriculum in use for early childhood care and education especially in Nigeria rural communities. Despite the overwhelming importance of this level of education on the overall growth and development of the entire education system, except for policy provisions government is yet to take a practical step in the provision of pre-school education. Government is only committed to its effective implementation by way of legislation and quality control.

Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality

The introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria was a right step towards the actualization of this EFA goal. This is because UBE is an expression of Nigeria government strong desire to provide uninterrupted free and compulsory education to all her citizens from primary to junior secondary schools (Aja, 2012). The programme recorded unprecedented increase in primary school pupils' enrolment as it rose from 18 million in 1999 to 25 million in 2002 (FGN /UBEC,2010) . Appreciable success was also recorded in areas of students' enrolment at the junior secondary school level throughout all the states in Nigeria. However, 100 percent enrolments of school age children into primary and junior secondary schools are yet to be achieved notwithstanding 2015 target. This is evident as many school age children are still seen in major cities and towns hawking or doing other menial jobs during the school hours. Others are languishing in the villages or taken to towns as house helps all in the efforts to cushion the economic hardship of their families.

GOAL 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

This basic learning and life skills according to article 1 of the World Declaration on Education For All comprise of essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to develop their full capacities.

Reasonable progress has been recorded by government of Nigeria in her bid to provide a type of education that can meet the basic of every citizen by introducing new and expanded curriculum in primary and

junior secondary schools as well as the establishment of equipped skills acquisition centres all over the country by various levels of government. There is no doubt that this aspect of Education For All goal is necessary in Nigeria considering the soaring unemployment of her youths but this notwithstanding, the reality on the ground is that equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills by all Nigerian citizens is yet to be achieved.

Goal 4: Achieving a 50 percent improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015 especially for women and equitable access basic and continuing education for all adults

Nigeria government has done much in this direction through her federal and state ministries of education's adult and non formal (mass education) units, National Teachers Institute's Distance Learning System and women empowerment programmes of ministries of women affairs and offices of Her Excellencies, the wives of Governors and the President of Nigeria. The impact of these government interventions is far reaching but more is needed as chances of every adult to basic literacy programme especially in rural populace are still low.

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality

In Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education Act of 2014 and other laws established to protect the rights of citizens to basic education are laudable government efforts to achieve EFA goal 5 but in most communities in Nigeria, there still exist discrimination between male and female education with preference to male. This ugly condition according to Ofoefuna (2012), was attributed to many factors which include family socio-economic status, cultural/religious, school programmes and policies etc which are difficult to be broken by external forces

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills

Nigeria government has put in place measures to guarantee quality of education in the country through the provisions of her National policy on education. The federal and state ministries of education through the inspectorate units and education boards are up and doing to ensure that Nigeria conform with the policy provisions. Several types of appraisal of learning outcome of pupils and students in primary and secondary schools reports reveal that their performances leave much to be desired.

This implies that the desired quality of education at these levels is yet to be achieved in Nigeria and may be far-fetched except with improved funding of the UBE programme.

A cursory look on the budgetary provisions for education in the past ten years show that education is grossly underfunded when compared with the 26 percent minimum budgetary provision for education as recommended by UNESCO.

Year	percentage
2002	7.89
2003	7.96
2004	10.21
2005	8.40
2006	10.2
2007	10.5
2008	10.6
2009	10.6
2010	6.2
2011	10.5

Source: CIVIL Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA, 2012).

WAY Forward to ensure the realization of the goals of EFA in Nigeria

7. Government should pursue the actualization of the millennium development goals (MDGs) vigorously because if extreme poverty and hunger is eradicated, universal primary education is provided, gender equality education and women empowerment are guaranteed, child mortality reduced, maternal health improved, disease combated, environmental sustainability assured and global partnership for development put in place then the challenges confronting education for all will be a thing of the past.

Specifically, borrowing a leaf from Oruwari (2012), the following measure will go a long way in ensuring that the national objectives of education for all which has been domesticated in Nigeria in form of the universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. They include:

- Adequate funding of education
- Effective planning in the education sector using appropriate data.
- Effective implementation of the new and expanded curriculum
- Provision of adequate infrastructural facilities in all the educational institutions
- Improvement on the infrastructural facilities in all the educational institutions
- Regular monitoring and supervision of school and instructional programmes.
- Provision of guidance and counseling services in our school to tackle pupils/students problems.
- Carrying the attitudinal change programme to the

school so that children will be socialized into democratic values and aspiration of our nation Nigeria

CONCLUSION

The success of education for all is the responsibility of all. In view of the indispensable roles of education in personal and social development, it is expected that the entire citizens of Nigeria should assume ownership of new educational programme considering the enormous problems so far discussed that could be better handled by all and sundry than government being solely responsible for education in the country with a population of about 150 million in which children constitute about 45 percent.

REFERENCES

- Aja SN (2012). Analysis of demand and supply of teachers for the Universal Basic Education(UBE) in Ebonyi state junior secondary schools. Unpublished Ph.D thesis Faculty of Education, Ebonyi state university, Abakiliki
- Azukaego OI (2012). Education For All. In N.I. Ogbonnaya, R.Akpan and D. Ajaegbo (eds.) Education For All: the Journey so far. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy.n Ltd

- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National policy on education. Abuja: Federal Ministry of education.
- Maduewesi BU, Maduewesi CP (2012). Empowering Women and barriers to Women Education. In B.U. Maduewesi, D.A.Aboho, K. Ezeoba, and R. Obi (eds) Emerging issues in Education of special Target Group: West Solomon publishing Coy L.td.
- Ofoefuna MO (2012). Importance of women education in National Development. In B.U. Maduewesi, D.A. Aboho, K. Ezeoba R. Obi (eds) Emerging issues in education of the special Target Group. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy. L.t.d.
- Oruwari JN (2012). Challenges to the implementation process of Education for all and the Way forward. In N.I. Ogbonnaya, R. Akpan and D.Ajaegbo (eds) education for all: the Journey so far. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy. L.t.d

How to cite this article: Aja S.N., Eze P.I. and Nick E. (2014). Over view of the progress and challenges of education for all in Nigeria. Educ. Res. 5(7):257-260