



# **CURRENT ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

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# **Effective Management Strategies for a Free and Compulsory School System in Kwara State**

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## **Introduction**

The success of any human endeavour is largely dependent on effective management of its component variables. Consequently, effective management strategies become a necessity for the success of any educational policy or programme. Management in this context is conceived as the process concerned with creating, maintaining, stimulating, controlling and unifying formally and informally within a unified system designed to accomplish predetermined objectives (Aghenta,1998). When related to education, management is a process of getting things done with particular reference to the process of planning, organizing, leading, staffing and evaluating the human and material resources. These activities are geared towards the accomplishment of educational programme with a view to achieving the educational objectives.

For the continuous operation of any educational programme, such as the free compulsory Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, there is a dire need for effective management strategies to ensure its successful operation. These management strategies would include, among others, pinning, funding, monitoring and provision of necessary resources.

A free compulsory school system connotes an educational-programme that is tuition free and made obligatory for the corresponding school age population. As far back as 1959, the United Nations adopted a resolution on education that must be free and compulsory, at least up to the elementary level. Moreover, the education given to the child must contribute to his general culture and grant him conditions of equal opportunities to judgement and sense of moral responsibility to become a useful member of his society. In the same vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria (1998) reiterates that the primary and the junior secondary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory.

In realisation of the importance of education as the basic tool of the Nigerian child for an all-round development, Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education Scheme on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999. Under this scheme, every Nigerian child would, as a matter of right, be entitled to basic

education up to the junior secondary school level. This education would be free, universal and compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fifteen years. In effect, it encompasses education in the primary and junior secondary schools.

The UBE scheme is not the first initiative in the area of child education in Nigeria. In 1976, the Federal Military Government, under General Olusegun Obasanjo, adopted a national policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE). This gave every child the right to free primary education. The 1976 and earlier attempts of the Western government in 1955 and Eastern government in 1957 failed due to serious lack of planning before take-off, especially in the areas of finance, personnel and facilities. It should be noted that in these earlier attempts the compulsory aspect of the education was not included. Therefore, considering the implementation of the current school system in Nigeria - the UBE which is free and compulsory, it is imperative that adequate management strategies be put in place to ensure its success.

### **The Problem**

The present school system in Nigeria is free and compulsory for all school age children between the ages of six and fifteen years. That is, children in primary schools up to junior secondary three. In reality, however, the junior secondary aspect of the school system has not been implemented. The programme kicked off with primary level for the current 2000/2001 academic session. This paper is therefore limited to the management of free compulsory primary education as a basis for extension to the junior secondary schools. Also, though the UBE scheme encompasses both the formal and the non-formal education, this paper focuses only on the formal schooling.

Therefore, taking a cue from the constraints of the earlier attempts at universal and free (non - compulsory) education, effective planning and adequate provisions for implementation of the school system become crucial. , This is more so, with the compulsory aspect of the system which could mean more and better attendance at school by children. It is therefore important to investigate the level of preparedness of the State for the implementation of the new school system with a view to suggesting strategies for effective management of the system. Specifically, this study focused on:

- i) the level of preparedness of Kwara State for the free and compulsory school system, in terms of classroom facilities and teachers supply;

- ii) the management strategies necessary for the successful operation of the school system.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How adequate are classroom facilities for a free and compulsory school system in Kwara State?
2. How adequate are the teachers supplied for a free and compulsory school system in Kwara state?
3. What management strategies are needed for a successful operation of a free and compulsory school system in Kwara State?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The design of this study is a descriptive survey type- carried out among key officials of Kwara State Primary Education Board (SPEB), the agency controlling primary education in the State and the primary school heads. The study involved the use of questionnaires and unstructured interviews and documents. The questionnaire and interviews were used to elicit opinions of people on management of a free compulsory school system in Kwara State.

#### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The population of this study comprised all the officials in charge of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme at the Kwara State Primary Education Board (SPEB) and Primary school heads. Ten officials of UBE at SPEB and 300 head teachers randomly selected from six of the sixteen Local Government Areas of Kwara State were used as the study sample.

#### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Three types of instruments were used to collect the relevant data for this study. These were the questionnaire, an unstructured interview and records on available resources obtained from SPEB. The questionnaire tagged "Free Compulsory School System Management Strategies Questionnaire" (FCSSMSQ) enumerated the management strategies for an effective free

compulsory school system in practice. The respondents were required to indicate the strategies already adopted in the operation of UBE programme in Kwara State in a ranked order. The questionnaire was validated through comments from experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.

The unstructured interviews were conducted with the officials in charge of UBE at SPEB and some school heads with a view of obtaining better insight into the actual strategies employed so far in the operation of UBE in the State. Data were also collected from the records of facilities and teachers on ground and those actually needed from SPEB. The distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire and the conduct of interviews were done by the investigator. Data from existing records were also personally collected.

### **Procedure for Data Analysis**

The data collected on available resources (facilities and teachers) were analysed using simple percentage. The management strategies already adopted for UBE were also converted to percentages and then rank-ordered.

### **Results**

The results of this investigation are presented as in tables 1-3. Question 1: How adequate are classroom facilities in Kwara State for a free and compulsory school system?

#### **programme at Primary School Level in Kwara State.**

S/N	LGA	Class room	Classrooms in good conditions	%	Additional Classroom Require	%
1.	Asa	470	94	20.0	520	110.6
2.	Baruten	372	74	19.9	812	218.3
3.	Edu	303	61	20.1	651	214.9
4.	Elriti	157	31	19.7	178	113.3
5.	Ifelodun	2,076	415	19.9	70	3.4
6.	Dorm-East	675	135	20.0	755	111.9
7.	Ilorin - South	412	82	19.9	462	112.1
8.	Ilorin-Weit	730	146	20.0	869	119.0
9.	Irepodun	537	107	19.9	40	7.4
10.	Isin	403	81	20.1	11	2.7

11	Kaiama	624	125	20.0	676	108.3
12.	Moro	395	79	20.0	565	143.0
13.	Offa	398	80	20.1	27	6.8
14.	Oke - Ero	212	42	19.8	236	111.3
15.	Oyun	494	99	20.0	23	6.5
16.	Patigi	355	71	20.0	23	6.5
	Total	8613	1722	19.9	5930	68.8

Source: SPEB (2002) Report by Kwara State Primary Education Board for QBE (p. 2)

Table 1 reveals the data on available classroom facilities in the primary schools in the 16 Local Government Areas of Kwara State. The Table shows that in spite of the fact that 68.89% (between 2.7% and 218.3%) of the available classrooms are still needed in the state, only 19.9% of the existing classrooms are in good conditions.

**Question 2:** How adequate are the teachers supplied in Kwara State for a free and compulsory school system?

**Table 2: Statistics Showing Teachers Demand and Supply for UBE Programme at Primary School Level in Kwara State.**

S/N	LGA	No of Teachers	Additional Teachers Required	%
1.	Asa	876	768	87.7
2.	Baruten	724	1022	141.2
3.	Edu	775	815	105.2
4.	Ekiti	382	238	62.3
5.	Ifelodun	1570	856	54.5
6,	Horin - East	1123	870	77.5
7.	Ilorin - South	658	534	81.2
8.	Horin - West	1506	963	63.9
9.	Irepodun	949	40	4.2
10.	Isin	450	11	2.4
11.	Kaiama	524	800	152.7
12.	Moro	1277	799	62.6
13.	Offa	898	27	3.0
14.	Oke - Ero	345	24	6.9

15.	Oyun	783	35	4.5
16.	Patigi	471	23	4.9
	TOTAL	13,311	7,825	914.7

Data on teachers demand and those actually on ground are presented on Table 2. The table shows that 7,825 teachers are required in addition to the 13,307 teachers already employed and currently teaching in the schools. This implies that 58.8% of the teachers already employed are still needed for an effective operation of UBE that would take care of all children of primary school age.

### Question 3

**What management strategies are being currently adopted for the operation of a free and compulsory school system in Kwara State?**

Table 3: Management Strategies adopted for a Free Compulsory School System in Kwara State.

S/N	Management Strategies	Number of Respondents	%	Rank
1.	Continuous planning based on accurate data	6	1.94	8
2..	Adequate financial con&fl Uttcut	12	3.87	6
3.	Teachers' production and recruitment	15	4.84	5
4.	Joint ownership	22	7.09	4
5.	Continuous evaluation through monitoring	4	1.29	9
6.	Mobilization of the populace	96	30.97	1
7.	Provision of physical facilities	10	3.23	7
8.	Enforcement of compulsory attendance	4	1.29	9
9.	Staff performance evaluation techniques	47	15.16	3
10.	Staff remuneration package	94	30.32	2

As shown in Table 3, the management strategy ranked first was mobilization of the

populace for the new school system. However as important as they are to the success of the system, teachers, funds and planning were ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Other rankings were staff remuneration (2<sup>nd</sup>), Staff performance evaluation (3<sup>rd</sup>), joint ownership (5<sup>th</sup>) and provision of physical facilities (7<sup>th</sup>). Continuous evaluation through monitoring and enforcement of compulsory attendance were ranked the same (9<sup>th</sup>).

## **Discussion of Results**

The findings of this study have revealed shortages in the necessary facilities for a successful operation of a free compulsory school system in Kwara State, even for primary education alone. The acute shortage of classroom facilities as shown in Table 1 is a deplorable situation. It should be noted that a few new structures and or repaired structures are slowly springing up in the schools. Though, data on these structures are just being collated, it is observed that the pace of construction and or repair is rather too slow.

In the same vein, statistics on Table 2 revealed inadequacies in the available teachers for the UBE programme in the State. Teachers are the real anchors of any educational programme and as observed by Ijaiya (1998 p. 58) "teachers, both in terms of quality and quantity are far too important in the teaching/learning process and for attainment of educational objectives to be toyed with". Therefore, this revelation of inadequacy in teachers' supply is a cause for concern.

Results on Table 3 showed the management strategies put in place for a successful UBE Scheme at the primary school level in Kwara State. Public enlightenment was ranked first. Through policy dialogues at local levels, considerable awareness has been provided for the scheme. Staff remuneration package and staff performance evaluation techniques were ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively. This ranking is a reflection of the current emphasis on improved conditions of service for the civil servants in general, and teachers in particular. Adequate funding ranked 6 among the strategies employed to manage UBE programme in the state is an anomaly. Funds should be provided for other strategies such as teachers production and provision of facilities, in order for the scheme to be implemented successfully. Such facilities include physical structure and instructional materials such as textbooks. The need for the production and use of relevant textbooks, by teacher and pupils was stressed by Abdulkareem (2000). These textbooks particularly in the core subjects are a necessity for effective teaching and learning in the schools.

In the same vein, teachers production and recruitment ranked 5<sup>th</sup> is a very important factor towards the success of the school system. However, the method of crash-training secondary school failures as teachers is not the best. This procedure might not produce the right caliber of teachers for the system. The resultant poorly-prepared teachers, as observed by Chapman (1994), would find it difficult to face the challenges of the classroom. Among other strategies not given the required emphasis is planning based on accurate data. Though planning is supposed to be a continuous process, a country like Nigeria without a reliable population census, is a planless country. This is because effective planning is difficult if not impossible, without accurate baseline data (Obioma, 1999).

On joint ownership, as rightly observed by Obanya (1999), there is the need to expand partnership in the management of the UBE scheme in order to achieve ownership. Likewise, Odiwaiye (2000) emphasized the need for community and parental participation in the successful implementation of UBE in Nigeria. However, the roles of the various stakeholders - the governments at the three levels, parents and the general public - is yet to be explicitly spelt out. Though continuous evaluation through effective monitoring was not properly emphasized, regular appraisal of the human and material resources involved in the UBE scheme is a necessity. This is to identify the progress made, areas of deficiency and what needs to be done. As noted by Ojedele (1988), implementation has always been a serious handicap to most genuine efforts towards developing the educational system in Nigeria. Ojedele (1988) thus suggested that:

If the Nigerian educational system is to develop and compare favourably with the advanced countries of the world, there is the need to monitor and evaluate each state of the implementation process so as to ensure that projects are being implemented according to plans (p. 2).

This suggestion is a necessity for success in the UBE implementation

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study investigated the management strategies in use for the free compulsory school system in Kware State, towards successful implementation. It was revealed that resources such as classroom facilities and teachers were in short supply. Some of the currently employed imangement strategies were also found to be misplaced. Such strategies included among others, funding, planning on accurate data and provi: facilities.

To achieve a successful operation of a free and compulsory education at the primary level, and as a basis for its introduction and management at the junior secondary level later, the following suggestions are made.

There is the need for an emergency construction programme to more classrooms, repair non-functional ones, build, equip and re-laboratories and libraries. Subsequently, there should be progressive improvement of these facilities and instructional materials.

Adequate number of trained and qualified teachers should be employed to teach in the schools. Towards the production of these functional teachers, there might be the need to review the curricula of Colleges of Education. Moreover, the Faculty of Education of the University of Ilorin should play a role in producing quality graduate teachers in addition to practical researches and publications on effective measures towards the success of UBE in the State. As a short term measure, instead of training school certificate failures as implied by the Federal Government mandate given to the National Teachers' Institute to produce 30,000 teachers yearly for the UBE Scheme (Akhaine, 2001), unemployed NCE holders should be given some orientation to refreshen their memories before employment.

Government should ensure by law that all children of school age go to school. Concrete measures for enforcing the law should be put in place. Such measures might include enacting appropriate laws to deter erring parents and guardians. The use of social welfare officers might also help enforce compulsory attendance of children at schools. These would drastically reduce the practice of child labour that is rampant in the society.

The major problem to be tackled is lack of funds on which most of the aforementioned actions depend. The federal government should continue to fund the UBE programme with assistance from lower levels and other stakeholders well spelled out. However, if the government is the sole financier, the programme might not be well funded. It should be borne in mind by all and sundry that though educational policies require huge amount of money to execute, no amount of money is too much for education.

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