

Educational Resource Centre as a Means of Providing Appropriate Learning Experiences in the Universal Basic Education Programme

Owuamanam, Catherine Nkechinyere (Ph.D)

Faculty of Education National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), P.M.B 7078, Ogbor-Hill, Aba-Abia State, Nigeria | Email: nyerekate@yahoo.com

Abstract: Primary education is central to the concept of Basic Education. Basic Education is a continuous process of laying the foundation of lifelong education for individual and national development. A well organized and implemented basic education equips the learners with reading, writing, numeracy, manipulative and life skills as well as moral and civic values. The aim of this paper is to examine how Educational Resource Centre could help to provide appropriate learning experiences for students in the Universal Basic Education programme. The paper therefore, looked at Universal Basic Education in Nigeria, the learning needs/objectives of the various components of the UBE, The Educational resource center as a powerful tool in education, the Educational Resource Centre as a provision of appropriate learning experiences of the UBE Programme, the situation of basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria and finally, proffers suggestions to the problems discovered.

Keywords: Basic education, literacy, numeracy, Educational Resource Centre, learning experiences.

Introduction

All over the world, primary education has been regarded as the most important as well as the most patronized by people. This perhaps may be due to the fact that it is the foundation of the whole educational pursuit which is expected to provide literacy and enlightenment to the citizens. The importance of primary education can therefore be seen in the sense that all beneficiaries of the other levels of education by necessity have to pass through this level (Bello, Atand and Labo-popoolaon, 2017). What this means is that primary education defined as the education given in an institution for children aged 6-11 years plus constitutes the bedrock upon which the entire education system is built. Indeed, the success and failure of the entire education system are determined by it.

Primary education is central to the concept of Basic Education. Basic Education is a continuous process of laying the foundation of lifelong education for individual and national development. A well organized and implemented basic education equips the learners with reading, writing, numeracy, manipulative and life skills as well as moral and civic values. Basic education should lead to permanent numeracy and literacy.

These two skills are critical to the linkage between education and national development (Vanguard Media Limited, 2017). It is with this understanding that Nigeria opted to universalize and extend the scope of basic education. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was formally launched by the Head of state on 30th September, 1999. The federal Government UBE, 2000 implementation Blue print identifies the three components or segments of the UBE as follows:

- Formal basic education encompassing the first nine years of schooling (primary and Junior secondary education for all children);
- Nomadic education of school age children of pastoral nomads, migrant fishermen and farmers; and
- Literacy and non-formal education for out of school children, youth and illiterate adults (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1993).

All the knowledge, skills and positive attitudes which the UBE learners are expected to acquire must come by their experiencing of content of that education through the senses.

Experiencing in the UBE is therefore, the process of helping the learners to acquire knowledge and skills in numeracy, literacy and life skills through active participation in the instructional process. Experiencing and research into the provision for the learning needs of children within the frame work of the provisions of pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria revealed factors which hinder the realization of objectives of basic education. Some National research findings prove that the availability of resources in the schools; mastery of knowledge and skill by teachers for use of resources; technical personnel and effective supervision of the use of educational resources are not adequate (Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF/UNESCO Monitoring of Learning Achievement Project, 1997).

These ugly realities in the basic education content delivery efforts discovered through national research projects call for immediate solution, so that the learning needs of the UBE will be provided and objectives achieved. In addressing this issue, Educational Resource Centre with its powerful functions can impact meaningfully on the achievement of the UBE objectives. Educational Resource Centre could help to provide appropriate learning experiences in the UBE programme. Educational Resource Center is a central pool of teaching and learning materials, equipment and facilities for production of materials, storage, indexing and retrieval as well as advice, servicing and loan systems for the purposes of improving the quality of instruction and extending knowledge (Akude, 2004). The objective of this study is to examine how the Educational Resource Centre could help to provide appropriate learning experiences in the Universal Basic Education programme.

The Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria was launched in 1999 with the goal of providing “free universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child aged 6-15 years” (FRN, 2004). The programme, however, was not able to take off immediately after its launch as it did not have legal backing. Therefore, initial UBE- related activities were carried out only in areas of social mobilization, infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials and so on. The UBE programme only took off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004 (Centre for Public Impact, 2017). The main beneficiaries of the programme are:

- Children aged 3-5years, for Early Children Care and Development Education (ECCDE);
- Children aged 6-11+years for primary school education;
- Children aged 12-14+years for junior secondary school education (FRN, 2004).

The UBE programme objectives include:

- Ensuring an uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education by providing free and compulsory basic education for every child of school-going age under:
 - I. Six years of primary education
 - II. Three years of Junior Secondary Education providing Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE).
- Reducing school drop-out and improving relevance, quality and efficiency; and
- Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2017).

The Basic features of Universal Basic Educational programme are:

- Free formal Basic education.
- Compulsory, uninterrupted Nine years of primary and Junior Secondary school education.
- Emphasis on curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations.
- Disarticulation of Junior Secondary Schools from Senior Secondary Schools.
- Introduction of rudiments of computer literacy.
- Appropriate continuous teacher professional development.
- Community ownership of schools including participation in decision-making process in schools (UBEC, 2017).

The learning needs/objectives of the various components of the Universal Basic Education

The learning needs/objectives of the various components of the UBE are provided below. The table begins with the pre-primary Education sub-sector because pre-primary education is the preparatory level that lays the foundation for the primary education.

The learning needs/objectives of the various components or groups of the Universal Basic Education

S/N	SEGMENT	LEARNING NEEDS/OBJECTIVES
i.a	Pre-primary Education	Exposition to :
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate care and supervision in the absence of parents and guardians;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free but guided individual and group activities in a healthy and learning (playful) environment;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the child for the primary level of education;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning experiences leading to the acquisition of good habits especially good health habits;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social norms;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the spirit of inquiry and creativity through exploration of nature and the local environment, through playing with toys, artistic and

		musical activities and so on;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of co-operation and team spirit;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning of rudiments/basics of number, letters, colours, shapes and forms through play.
		The range of subjects through which the knowledge and skills are acquired include:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics (Arithmetic)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local language
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poems/Rhymes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/Signing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Science/Nature Study
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral/Religious instruction
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports and games

i.b		
	Primary education	Exposition to learning experiences that will lead to:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acquisition of permanent literacy, numeracy and development of the ability to communicate effectively;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of sound citizenship education, good moral, character and positive attitudes;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for developing manipulative skills and attitude for practical work;
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of socially desirable skills

	Primary 1-3	LOWER BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM CORE COMPULSORY SUBJECTS
		1. English Studies
		2. Mathematics
		3. Nigerian Language (One Nigerian Language)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Science and Technology (BST)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Science
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Technology
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and Health Education
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Technology (IT)
		5 Religion and National Value (RNV)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Education
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security Education
		6 Cultural and creative Arts (SCA)
		7 Arabic Language
	Primary 4-6	MIDDLE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM Subjects
		1. English Studies

		2. Mathematics
		3. Nigerian Language (One Nigerian Language)
		4. Basic Science and Technology (BST)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic Science
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic Technology
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical and Health Education
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Technology (IT)
		5 Pre-vocational Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home Economics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agriculture
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurship
		6 Religious and National Values (RNV)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Studies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civic Education
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Security Education
		7 Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)
		8 French Language
		9 Arabic language.

source: NERDC, 2013

<p>ii</p>	<p>literacy and non-formal education for out-of-school children, youth and illiterate adult</p>	<p>These groups like counterparts in the other sections are exposed to the relevant learning experiences in formal institutional settings. Their range of basic education needs run from basic literacy, post literacy and vocational. Therefore, they need exposure to learning experiences for the acquisition of basic literacy as in the case of primary education sector, and relevant learning experiences for the acquisition of knowledge and skills for operations at the post literacy and vocational levels. The content for the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skill, aptitude, etc. are both academic and vocational:</p> <p>1 Academic subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language - mathematics/arithmetic • reading - writing • local language -social studies • hygiene/health education • religious education -home education • integrated sciences -drawing/painting • physical education -book keeping <p>2 Vocational Subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knitting -Farming/Agriculture • Tailoring/Fashion Designing • Crafts/Arts -Soap Making • Tie and Dyeing -Cloth Weaving • Painting/Drawing and Decorating • Soya Milk Making -Pomade/Cream making • Basket Weaving -Typing <p>Other Technical Vocational Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpentry • Auto mechanics
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Source: Instructional Materials Development and Utilization for UBE Segments

The Educational Resource Centre as a Powerful Tool in Education

A resource could be considered as anything which will aid, stimulate and motivate learning as well as things that can simplify the process of classroom teaching. In fact, its range has no limit (Akude, 2004). This implies that an educational resource will be considered as anything which could be of great help in our effort to solve educational problems. To this end, Beswick (as cited in Akude, 2004) stated that a resource include anything which may be an object of study or stimulus for the pupil, includingS books, periodicals, newspapers, mobiles, press cuttings, pictures, charts, maps, slides, filmstrips, records, audio-tapes, radio and television programmes.

These self-instructional materials in all their various formats are probably the most common type of learning resource and these are often housed centrally in a resource centre (Akude, 2004). An educational resource centre, therefore, is “a central pool of teaching and learning materials, equipment and facilities for production of materials, storage, indexing and retrieval as well as advice, servicing and loan systems, for the purposes of improving the quality of instruction and extending knowledge (Onyejemezi, 1977). Education Resource Centre (ERC) is a setting (space) where educational resources such as materials, tools and equipment can be designed, developed, utilized, borrowed and stored (Abimade, 1999). It varies in terms of its arrangement ranging from a classroom corners to an entire complex building, depending on the objectives, curricular emphasis and financial ability.

An educational resource centre can be centralized, decentralized or co-ordinated, depending on many factors such as: fund, objectives of the organization and available Resources (human and material). A centralized resource centre is one that functions as a sole facility within a state or local government responsible for acquiring, cataloguing and storing instructional materials. Because of the need to loan resources to individuals or schools, the emphasis shifts towards decentralization.

A decentralized resource centre is the one which functions independently within a given school building. It is responsible for acquiring, cataloguing and storing instructional materials. Such a resource centre is available for use by students as well as teachers and so designed to serve the single school in which it is located.

A co-ordinated resource centre operates as a system. It contains a network of schools' resource centre but it is supplemented and served by a central one which provides additional equipment and services. Equipment, tools and resources that each school cannot afford to procure are brought and kept in the centre. For example, buying expensive TV studio equipment, overhead projectors and computer hardware. In this way, the centre co-ordinates the operation of the entire system and serve as a supplement to each of the subordinate resource centres (Abimade, 1999).

Education is concerned with the gradual development of the individual so that he will find in the school curricula and society a place where he can be comfortable, successful and secure and later contribute in developing the society (Onyejemezi, 1988) In pursuance of this objective in Nigeria, the government has been striving towards evolving ways and means of making education relevant and meaningful to the child and society.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) outlines the main objectives of Educational Services. Educational Services facilitate the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of educational system. The objectives include:

- Develop, assess and improve educational programmes;

- Enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers;
- Make learning experiences more meaningful for children;
- Make education more cost-effective;
- Promote in-service education; and
- Develop and promote effective use of innovative materials in schools.

The above laudable objectives clearly indicate government's awareness in the importance of quality education as a springboard for all other forms of development. In order to achieve these objectives, the government proposes that there should be collaboration between the Federal and State Government in the setting up of Educational Resource Centres. It is meant that there should be close cooperation and constant consultation between the centres and all educational institutions for the development of teaching and learning materials and their effective utilization. It is important to note that various governments as well as educational institutions have taken the bull by the horn. The Federal Government has established the National Educational Technology Centre at Kaduna to render consultancy services to both the government and Educational Institutions in matters relating to educational resource production and utilization. Some state governments and some institutions of higher learning have also set up their own centres. For example, some of them include:

- The Curriculum Development and Evaluation Centre (formerly Modern Aids to Education Centre), Enugu which is now owned by the Enugu State Ministry of Education.
- The Teachers Resources Centre Jos was established by the Plateau State Ministry of Education.
- In 1973 the library Department of the University of Ibadan opened up a Pilot Resource Centre Known as the Abadina Media Resource Centre.
- The faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka has her Curriculum Development and Instructional Materials Centre (CUDIMAC).
- The faculty of Education University of Benin has her Instructional Resources Centre.
- The institute of Education, Ahmadu Bellow University Zaria has her Centre for Educational Technology. And
- The Anambra State College of Education, Nsugbe formally inherited a formidable and well equipped centre for Educational Technology (CEDUTEK) from the defunct Anambra State College of Education Awka as a result of the merger of the two institutions (Akude, 1999).

The Task Force Committee endorsed the objectives of the educational services and recommended that in the Secondary Schools, the Learning Resource Centre should be an integral part of the library, serving all the departments. The primary schools will be catered for by the zonal offices of the Educational Resource Centre in Each local government areas. The Educational Resource Centre performs the following functions:

- Provides professional assistance to teachers and students or pupils in the design, production and utilization of instructional materials.
- Provides educational media, including learning kits for individual or group instruction by teachers, students or pupils.
- Classifies and indexes all resources available to the school and even those outside the school.

- Liaises with outside bodies so as to serve as a coordinating centre for outside borrowing and cooperation.
- Maintains and repairs all audio-visual hard waves owned by parent institutions.
- Becomes an agency for curriculum innovation and teacher development.
- Provides opportunities for in-service training courses for serving teachers.
- Makes effective evaluation and selection of appropriate instructional materials which the state government procures and sends to the respective primary and Post-Primary schools.
- Planning and organizing educational broadcasting.
- Carrying out research, evaluation and training programmes in educational technology.
- Provides opportunities for groups of teachers who may collaborate in producing series of items for specific courses.
- Acts as a supportive service for dealing with full ability range of pupils and for the provision of good learning situations which enable pupils work at their own pace and be actively involved in learning (Abimbade, 1999).

Educational Resource Centre as a means of providing appropriate learning experiences in the Universal Basic Education Programme

The introduction of audio-visuals increases the avenue of learning processes in the classroom. In effect, the use of audio-visual materials introduces variety in the teaching method and this helps to reduce the boredom that the pupils suffer from the traditional “chalk and talk” method. It caters for the individual learning needs and characteristics of the pupils. It enables them to learn at the rate which will be most appropriate to their needs, enabling them also to select materials that would be most helpful to them. The place of audio-visual materials in our classroom can therefore not be overemphasized (Richards, 2017).

Actually, Educational Resource Centre emphasizes personal participation in the making of the instructional materials and this helps to equip the students with the necessary production and utilization skills. Educational Resource Centre helps to ameliorate the relative isolation of the classroom from learning materials. It guarantees learners immediate access to materials. It makes learning more purposeful and productive since there is flexibility of time to study.

All the knowledge, skills and positive attitude which the UBE Learners are expected to acquire must come by their experiencing of the content of that education through the senses. Since the senses are the gate-ways to acquiring knowledge, it is necessary that they should be skillfully involved in the instructional process if meaningful learning or the expected level of competency in numeracy, literacy and life skills is to be achieved. Skillful involvement of the senses simply means presenting suitable learning experiences to the senses especially of the eye, ear, taste and touch. The learning experiences are presented to learners in the form of real objects/life situation, or representations of real life situation i.e. instruction/learning materials. For (Onyejemezi, 1990) experience implies activity of some kind- it is not simply something that happens. Experiencing for the learners means having them see, hear, touch, taste, make, do and try.

Experiencing in the UBE programme is therefore, the process of helping the learners to acquire knowledge and skills in numeracy, literacy and life skills through active participation in the instructional process. For the achievement of the UBE objectives or the sustenance of the UBE learners’ learning needs, the provision of appropriate learning experiences are made

available to the learners by the systematic integration of a variety of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process of each group. The learning experiences in turn result in effective or meaningful learning. The systematic integration of instructional materials in the learning process presupposes:

- The availability of the relevant educational resources for the UBE;
- The mastery of the knowledge and skill for the integration of resources by the teachers;
- Availability of well organized and equipped Instructional Educational Resource Centres, within the reach of the teachers;
- Availability of resource/technical personnel to enhance the use of available resources by teachers and learners;
- Effective supervision and monitoring of the use of educational resources in the UBE.

In improving the provision of appropriate learning experience in the UBE, the National Policy on Education (NPE 1981 and additions) stipulate that: Educational Resource Centre where teachers will meet for discussion, investigations, study, workshops, short courses and conferences will be set up in each State/Local Education Authority Area and that the centre will also be used for the development and testing of teaching materials.

The situation of Basic Education curriculum delivery in Nigeria

Experience and research into the provision for the learning needs of children within the frame work of the provisions of pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria revealed factors which hinder the realization of objectives of basic education. The National Report Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria/UNICEF Research on situation and policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria (SAPA) in summary clearly established the fact that the curriculum delivery practice in all the segments of basic education has not effectively addressed the needs of learners.

The severe shortage of instructional materials limits the teachers and pupils accessibility of appropriate learning experiences. This in turn impedes meaningful learning and mastery of numeracy, literacy and life skills (FGN, 1993). The Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF/UNESCO Monitoring of learning Achievement of primary four pupils in Nigeria, National Report (1997) discovered that;

- The level of numeracy competence of pupils was generally very low. The national mean score was 32.2 per cent.
- The performance in the literacy test was the worst of the three cognitive tests. The national mean score was 25.2 per cent which more or less represented performance at purely chance level.
- Pupils from private schools had a mean score of 40.8 per cent while those in public schools had a mean score of 15.3 per cent.
- Performance on the life skills was higher than any of the skill areas. The national mean score was 36.86 per cent with a standard deviation of 21.16.
- Private school pupils outperformed public school pupils. Their mean score was 48.04 per cent.
- Teachers (54.3 per cent) identified the provision of instructional materials as one of the things that could be done to improve teaching.
- Adequacy of instructional materials was one of the best predictors of learning achievement.

In the same vein, a study produced for the World Bank in 2000 on the Nigerian educational sector concluded that: the public perceptions are that the quality of education offered is low and that standards have dropped. These perceptions are based on lack of adherence to acceptable educational practice. Teachers' qualifications are low. The learning environment does not promote effective learning. Basic facilities, teaching and learning resources are generally not available. Teacher-pupil ratios are high. General performance in examination is poor and the graduates have low levels of competencies in the work environment (Centre for Public Impact, 2017).

Finally, UNESCO in its latest reviews of Nigerian's educational standing in 2015 concluded that:

- although progress has been made in basic education; much more remains to be done, both in quantity and quality;
- Participation in primary education is still low in comparison with primary school age population;
- The quality of the national school curriculum is undermined by the generally low quality of teachers who implement it, which translates into low levels of learning achievement;
- Infrastructure, toilets and furniture are inadequate and in a dilapidated state;
- The system of collecting comprehensive, relevant data for planning is weak;
- There are social and cultural barriers that are hindering female participation;
- There is a lack of enforcement of the UBE Act 2004 on enrolment and retention (Amuechie, Asotibe and Audul, 2015).

The ugly realities in the basic education content delivery efforts discovered through national research projects call for immediate solution so that the learning needs of the universal basic education will be provided and objectives achieved.

Suggestions

In keeping with this and in order to help teachers and learners to interact with relevant instructional materials, the following suggestions are made:

- There is urgent need that all our teacher education institutions should give this idea of establishing Education Resource Centres a priority attention.
- Considering the Federal Government's laudable motives for improvement of teaching and learning in our educational institutions, it would be most appropriate for the classroom teachers who will attend seminars and workshops organized by the Teacher's Resource Centre/Curriculum Development and Evaluation Centres to be able to practice what they learn.
- The existing Educational Resource/ Curriculum Material Resource Centers in the State Ministries of Education should be reactivated, well-equipped and their holdings and services made available to teachers and learners.
- Local Government Area Authorities should with the help of the Federal and State Government set up Instructional Resource centers in their headquarters and in the UBE schools and centers.
- Resources/technical personnel should be available for attending to the needs of staff and pupils.

- The National Educational Technology Centre, Kaduna must now step up its functions and attend to the needs of the universal basic education.
- Teachers must be properly re-oriented towards this new move.
- The Government should now provide the basic technologies such as regular electricity supply.
- The educational Radio and Television Broadcasting units in the states' Broadcasting services should also be reactivated and their services made available to schools.
- There should be active links/cooperation between the schools, Area, state and federal Resource Centres.

Conclusion

Primary Education is central to the concept of Basic Education. Basic Education is a continuous process of laying the foundation of lifelong education for individual and national development. A well organized and implemented basic education equips the learners with reading, writing, numeracy, manipulative and life skills as well as moral and civic values. This paper has examined how Educational Resource Centre could help to provide appropriate learning experiences in the UBE programme. Earlier efforts have not yielded appropriate results. It is hoped that with the new enthusiasm, for achieving the objectives of the UBE, these suggestions if adhered to will go a long way in helping improve the existing poor situation.

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