

Influence of Universal Basic Education on Political Development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract:-In this study, a careful examination of influence of Universal Basic Education on Political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria is made. The survey research design is used. Population of the study consisted of all teachers and stakeholders of Universal Basic Education in primary schools in Etung Local Government Area. The population size therefore was three hundred and fifty (350) teachers. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) respondents, forming the sample size. A structured instrument was used for data collection. Data was statistically analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between Universal Basic Education and Political development. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers, managers, government and all stakeholders in the Universal Basic Education programme should be more focused and dynamic in their tasks, with the understanding that these efforts would translate into political transformation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Political Stability, Government, Programme

I. INTRODUCTION

It has become very glaring that education is very central in the socio-political and economic development of nations. More so, educating the child would breed gradual moulding and transformation of the totality of the individual and shaping them to be functional in the society. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched on 30th September 1999 by the then President of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo. The programme is designed to provide free and compulsory education for children in the primary and junior secondary schools in the country. President Obasanjo on launching the scheme assured that the many problems that bedevilled the 1976 Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme would not be allowed to hamper the 9-year basic education programme. He further pointed out that the scheme is aimed at arresting the decline and decay as well as expanding and improving on the UPE scheme. Prior to the launching of the UBE, a child starts primary school at the age of 6 years or thereabout and graduates with a first school leaving certificate. He then takes a common entrance examination that qualifies him/her for admission into a

secondary school. The UBE came as a replacement of this system. The UBE involves 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior secondary school culminating in 9 years of uninterrupted schooling. Transition from one class to another is automatic, though assessed through continuous assessment. The UBE programme is designed to remove distortions and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and to reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education. It is also to provide greater access to basic education and ensure its quality throughout the country. The Universal Basic Education Act (2004) defines Universal Basic Education as early childhood care and education, the nine years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl-child and women, almajiri, street children and disabled groups.

Prior to the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the existing policy and programme of government for education was found to give rise to distortions, high rate of dropouts, narrow curriculum content and half-baked graduates that did not meet the needs of the society. The UBE scheme was therefore launched to address these problems by providing free, universal and compulsory basic education to all children regardless of sex, age, ethnic or religious inclinations, language or status. It is also to accommodate comprehensive adult literacy programme. The scheme is therefore designed to ensure adequate and qualitative education that is directed towards the achievement of the nation's objectives.

As a nation, Nigeria has been through an admixture of political incursions in an attempt to ensure a stable and developmental political atmosphere. There is a clear indication that politics in Nigeria has been the opposite of what it is in the developed countries. African politicians are still backward in terms of their values such as unfulfilled promises, political corruption, greed, violence, tribalism and intimidation. Elections being the instrument that engenders the enthronement of leaders and governance, has never been considered really free, fair and credible hence the continuous interplay of diverse dimensions of instability in the polity.

The major challenge of political instability in Nigeria is the lack of early internalization of the core political values of peace, love, non-violence, concession to defeat, morality, discipline and more, which to a large extent could be transferred from generation to generation at the Basic Education level. The children at this early level of education are taught the foundation and principle of governance, culture, peaceful co-existence and political history through several subjects like social studies, religious education, etc. These virtues become internalized and embedded in the learners, thereby forming a stronghold in the process of their growth and development. With time, they naturally transfer the good behavioural pattern into the political system for the onward stability and transformation of the society.

The study is conducted therefore to consider the influence of Universal Basic Education on Political Stability in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE

Education is the only means of transformation of society, it equips people with the needed knowledge, skills and competences which make them functional and contribute to the development of the nation, education as agent of growth, key to poverty reduction and engine for even distribution of income (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014). The national philosophy of education in Nigeria is enshrined in the National Policy on Education. According to this policy, the five national goals which Nigeria's philosophy of education draws its focus from are free and democratic society, just and egalitarian society, united, strong and self-reliant nation, great and dynamic economy and land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Based on the above national aspirations, the philosophy of the Nigerian education seeks to achieve objectives, such as the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, the full integration of the individual into the community and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In order to make the philosophy of education work harmoniously for Nigeria's goals, education in Nigeria has to be tailored towards self-realization, human relations, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. To this end, the Nigerian educational system is value-laden and aims at the betterment of the citizens to live a better life and contribute to the advancement of society (FRN, 2004; Benedict, 2008; David, 2008 & Adesina, 2011).

Education is an instrument for conserving, transmitting and renewing culture. It is therefore, the sum, total of person's experience (Mallinson, 1980; Moore, 1982). It is worthy of note that the Universal Basic Education (UBE)

is a new innovative trend in Nigeria's educational frame work particularly as it is programmed to be for 9 years. That is, it is designed to cater for a child's education from primary school to the end of the Junior Secondary School. It is also expected to be universal, free and compulsory (Enemuo, 2000).

The training of children and adolescents in the norms and aspirations of the nation is a very veritable instrument for national integration and development. It was expected that educational reforms or re-organisation would be carried out to enable Nigeria's education cater for the future professional needs (Ayeni, 2000). The restructuring is important, if we are to expect optimal result from our envisaged objectives of education. The Federal Government's involvement in the organization of UBE scheme was therefore necessary if the integration of the nationals was to be achieved. The scheme was also desirable to enable the Federal Government ensure that children are taught the culture of the society. The desire to inculcate in children the knowledge of literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate made the UBE scheme worthwhile. Apart from the above, there is the need to lay a sound foundation for scientific and reflective thinking, character and moral training and the development of sound attitude, and above all, develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

The introduction of the UBE in Nigeria was therefore a positive move by the country's administration to strive to achieve the MDGs and to address the agitations and yearnings of the Nigerian people for an educational system that would be more relevant to the socioeconomic, political and cultural background of the country. It also showed Government's commitment to the total eradication of illiteracy in the country.

It must be borne in mind that the child of today is the man of tomorrow. If our children are empowered educationally, their future would be guaranteed and we would have given them the best start in life. We would have also made it less difficult for them to carry out their civic duties and responsibilities as members of the society, since education is supposed to prepare one for life in the society. And the quality and calibre of human resources in a nation is an indication of the level of development that nation can attain.

Political instability has threatened national stability and cohesion in the entire continent of Africa. In Nigeria, despite the adoption of a number of mechanisms and strategies ranging from Education, Federalism, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Federal Character, Constitutionalism and the establishment of Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB); no corresponding impact has been seen in its democracy. Lack of corruption control, moral value, information and value re-orientation has continually led to little or no success in achieving political

stability in all subsequent elections and administrations since the emergence of democratic governance in 1999.

By far, the most effective way of ensuring political stability is by enthroning and sustaining democracy. Democracy is popularly referred to as government of the people, for the people and by the people. Democracy in its true sense is not a representative government, but the popular government in which the citizens have to participate directly in the exercise of sovereignty (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014). Democracy is not a more multi-party electoral competition; neither is it just for election as it has been reduced to. Democracy has come to be understood and practiced in Africa as mere right to vote and be voted for. Democracy ensures transformation of the society and its citizens through provision of and equitable distribution of goods and services such as food, electricity, portable water, education, etc. Sustainable democracy enhances good governance, transparency and accountability of political leaders, public servants and citizens and of course, political stability. Abdullahi & Abdullah, (2014) alludes to certain characteristics of democracy and good governance, which Africans need to imbibe to include:

1. It must be democratic in the sense of free, fair and credible elections on a universal suffrage.
2. It must respect the rule of law; there must be constitutional checks and balances to prevent misuse of state power; there must be protection of individual respect for minorities.
3. The system must supply economic programme which is growth oriented, inclusive and broad-based.
4. All citizens must feel involved in the nation's life.

Nigerian leaders are self-centred and seek power solely for self-aggrandizement. Their corruptive behaviour has not only seriously undermined political stability in Nigeria but has disempowered the citizens to the point that the very essence of democracy which is popular participation of the governed, and public accountability of the leaders is still far from being a reality. The Nigerian political elites regard the masses as 'unthinking bunch' whom they must decide for, manipulate and cajole.

It is a well-known fact that the skills, knowledge, virtue and values acquired in the early stage of life forms a substantial part of our behavioural pattern in the developmental process and we grow to become what we have learned in childhood. If a child imbibes the virtue of love, morality, peace, equity and fair play, he or she will eventually transfer same virtue to the polity system he grows to be part of vice versa. This would help to shape the polity system and move it towards the direction of stability. The Universal Basic Education has the onus and capacity to mould and re-mould learners, who automatically becomes major players in the future Nigerian political arena for good governance and overall stability.

Statement of the problem

Slow pace of development and instability has affected political development negatively; political parties, electoral process and governance in Nigeria have been plagued with corrupt practices and electoral irregularities such as violence, stuffing of ballot boxes, thuggery, intimidation and elimination of recalcitrant opposition candidates, rigging, bribing of electoral officials, security men and party agents in order to have a free hand to change results at polling booths or elsewhere. Other practices include denying voting cards to supporters of opposition parties, gerrymandering of constituencies so as to create an uneven playing ground for the oppositions as well as deliberate omissions of names from the voters' register, making of fictitious returns where elections did not take place, under age as well as multiple voting among others. The utter inability of Nigerian ruling elites to play electoral politics according to the rules of the game and corruption free has partly been responsible for military intervention in politics as it used to be in Nigeria.

Lack of transparency and accountability in office has been a bane in Nigeria. Transparency in public service cannot be achieved except every public act is done in an open manner; lack of it leads to avoidable speculations and loss of confidence in the instrument of power, and the process which has fanned the growth of corruption in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Lack of accountability and supervision has progressively bedevilled African states. As a result, some African elites have corrupted themselves and the public officers have forgotten that they are accountable to the electorates. In some instances, those in authority have abdicated their supervisory responsibilities and in the process laws and regulations have been breached without censure. Where this state of affairs has become prevalent, the public service has lent itself to abuse by dishonest politicians.

Resulting from the above negative scenario, this study attempts to ascertain the influence of Universal Basic Education on Political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

This study investigated the influence of universal basic education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study aimed at:

- i. Examining the influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research question

The research question below guided the study:

- i. To what extent does Universal Basic Education influence political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated to guide this study is stated as follows:

- i. There is no significant influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

III. METHOD

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised all primary school teachers in Etung Local Government Area. The population size therefore was three hundred and fifty (350) teachers. Stratified

random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) respondents, forming the sample size. A structured questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest reliability estimate which yielded co-efficient value of 0.644. The data obtained were statistically analysed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1 below.

IV. RESULTS

Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	R	p-level
Universal basic education	100	9.55	1.00	159	.182	.021
Political development	100	8.44	2.90			

*Significant at .05 level, df = 159; r=.182; p-level = .021

- i. The result shows that there is significant influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The probability level is below .05 at (0.21; r=.182 at 159 degrees of freedom). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected at .05 level with 159 degrees of freedom.

V. DISCUSSION

The result of this finding rejected the null hypothesis and claimed that there is significant influence of Universal Basic Education on political development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The implication of this is that, Universal Basic Education has a greater role to play in ensuring political stability and development. Universal Basic Education is focused on total childhood training that is capable of giving learners the required skills and values for socio-economic and political development and stability.

This corroborates the view of Ayeni (2000) that the UBE involves training of children and adolescents in the norms and aspirations of the nation which is a very veritable instrument for national integration and development. It was expected that educational reforms or re-organisation would be carried out to enable Nigeria’s education cater for the future professional needs. The restructuring is important, if we are to expect optimal result from our envisaged objectives of

education. The Federal Government’s involvement in the organization of UBE scheme was therefore necessary if the integration of the nationals was to be achieved. The scheme was also desirable to enable the Federal Government ensure that children are taught the culture of the society.

Again, the finding is in consonance with the position of the Federal Government of Nigeria, (1981) which indicated that the desire to inculcate in children the knowledge of literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate made the UBE scheme worthwhile. It added that apart from the above, there is the need to lay a sound foundation for scientific and reflective thinking, character and moral training and the development of sound attitude, and above all, develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment.

This result is consistent with the view of Abdullahi & Abdullah (2014) that Universal Basic Education is the only means of transformation of society, it equips people with the needed knowledge, skills and competences which make them functional and contribute to the development of the nation, education as agent of growth, key to poverty reduction and engine for even distribution of income.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between Universal Basic Education

and political stability in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

From the result of findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers, managers, government and all stakeholders in the Universal Basic Education programme should be more proactive in their tasks, with the understanding that these efforts would translate into political stability in Nigeria.
2. Learners under the UBE programme are also charged to be committed and dedicated in order to ensure proper acquisition of knowledge, skills and moral values, capable of engendering a new political order in the society.

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