Global Trends in Government Policies on Funding of Primary Education: Lesson for Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12050008

Received: 28 March 2025; Accepted: 01 April 2025; Published: 27 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed trends in government policies regarding funding primary education and used Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy as a case study, comparing it with other countries. This research proposition was based on the Human Capital Theory. Exploratory qualitative research was used in this study to analyze secondary data collected from various sources. The paper described the Nigeria UBE policy to increase school enrollment as being effective in achieving the policy objectives where school enrollment had been prompted noticeably in the urban centres notwithstanding the numerous barriers to the successful implementation of the Nigerian UBE policy. Also, inadequate and inconsistent funding, poor school infrastructure, and few competent teachers were found to hinder the full realization of the UBE policy in the identified areas. This is even though Nigeria has one of the youngest populations in the world; it has been established that the country only spends a little over 6% of its current national budget on education which is far less than UNESCO's recommended baseline of 15 – 20%. Furthermore, there was observed ethnic and regional differentiation in educational opportunities, and it was revealed that education remained insecure in Northern Nigeria due to cultural, economic and security factors. The paper also revealed that aid has served an important purpose in plugging the gap in education financing in most developing nations. Taking into consideration the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for educational expenditure in Nigeria. There is a need to enhance the national budget allocation to education to meet the international benchmark and ensure more complementary distribution of resources especially in the rural areas. There was also a suggestion that the Nigerian government should fund teacher training projects and undertake renovations of schools to boost the standard of education.

Keywords: Education Funding, Global Trends, Government Policies, Primary Education, Universal Basic Education (UBE)

INTRODUCTION

Education is globally accepted and appreciated as one of the most significant cornerstones of social, economic, and human advancement. As for primary education, it can be highlighted that it represents the foundation of the further learning process, and the main significant impact on the child's cognitive, social, and emotional development (UNESCO, 2015). Also, Awolowo in (Akinjide 2023), disposition to education is informed by the belief that no nation can develop when its citizens remain ignorant, poor and disease ridden. Awolowo believe a Universal and free education remain the ideal for justice and equity in any society. This conception of education lays emphasis on the three most important aspects of human growth namely, mental development, spiritual self realization and physical wellbeing. He sees education as the process of physical and mental culture whereby a man's personality is developed to the fullest. His disposition to education is informed by thoughts that no nation can develop without education. This philosophical belief underpins his policy of free education in Western Nigeria in 1955 which many believe metamorphosed into the Universal Basic Education years after. (Akinjide 2023) . It empowers people with the literacy and numeracy skills that enable them to contribute to the economy and society. First, primary education has even more significance in the context of GOs as it is considered in numerous global frameworks, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals for

2030, which states to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015). Hence, there is a global concern for education particularly at the primary level to be the leading tool in eradicating poverty, enhancing health and promoting social development.

Policies are key to the government's effort to implement universal education for all. Effective policies in addition to supporting education for all, also eradicate hindrances to access to primary education for marginalized groups. In various countries of the world, governments have employed several measures and policies that will help children of different classes to attend school. Such policies are usually directed towards the expansion of free education, development of school facilities, training of teachers and participating communities. The role of government policies can be evidenced by examples from the countries of Finland, the United States, and South Africa within which government policies have been observed to facilitate educational opportunities where the policies have been well structured and adequately funded leading to higher enrollment rates and improved educational results (World Bank, 2018).

Substandard facilities, inadequate funding, and unbalanced implementation of policies remain pivotal issues of concern about the achievements of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education for all the world's children, especially in developed and developing nations of the world. Funding has also been cited as a persistent problem in delivering quality primary education in many low-income countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that there is inadequate funding to provide and maintain quality infrastructure to support learning such as qualified teachers and relevant teaching aids that enhance the teaching and learning process. Whereas, emerging economies have better educational infrastructure that is equipped with sound policies and adequate funding and hence exhibit higher enrollments and better education. The following disparities reveal how different countries are far from achieving the set educational goals and a call to justice.

Nigeria, for instance has its Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy that was developed to offer free and compulsory primary education. But, twenty-five years since its introduction the UBE policy still experiences major implementation hurdles. Challenges like; irregular funding, poor quality school facilities, and lack of improvement in teacher education have been an albatross to the realization of these goals as put forth by Abah and Ezema (2021); Aja et al., (2018).). This has resulted in increased cases of out-of-school children and poor literacy rates as compared to the rest of the world. Although Nigeria has improved in its commitment to the implementation of the UBE policy, there is still the need to evaluate how the policy has fared with other best practices from other countries.

Comparing UBE policy in Nigeria with other countries' funding and policies on primary education is important in checking the gaps in UBE policy in Nigeria. Thus, it would be useful to evaluate the country experience of other countries wherein governmental policies promoted the enrollment of children and improved the quality of primary education. This analysis will inform the current and future debates on how to provide sustainable solutions toward education delivery in the developing world, particularly in areas of resource constraint. Consequently, this study aims to analyze global trends in government policies on the funding of primary education and compare the findings with Nigeria's Universal Basic Education policy (UBE) with the view to proffering suggestions for enhanced policy implementation and utilization of resources.

These are some of the identified issues impeding the success of education policies at both state and national level hence necessitating the attention of national policy. Some of these problems include; Firstly, poor funding of education; The United Nations acceptable budgetary frame work for education is twenty six percent (26%) of a country budget. However, this figure is hardly allocated in the past necessitating poor remuneration for teacher's maintenance of existing school facilities. The problem saw a sharp drop-in public-school environment and the emergence of private ones as alternative.

Secondly, the problem of inadequate manpower needed to drive educational process correctly. Most school is in dire need of teachers; Teacher with the right educational background and skills required engaging the children. Most of the teachers in both government and private school are not trained teachers but graduate or undergraduate students of various institutions. This impact of their delivery has exposed the high level of education illiterate in the society

Thirdly, the problem of inadequate infrastructure in schools; Most public buildings used for school purposes are best described as hen's pen. This is because most classrooms are small and not spacious for learning. Also laboratories are in short supply where provided for practical's. It is worthy of note that many governmental schools building are inadequate and not conducive for learning. And finally, the few teachers are hardly recognized and rewarded for their effort towards nation building. This is demoralizing and discouraging the young ones and youth from pursuing career in education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

UBE stands for Universal Basic Education, which is a government policy that seeks to provide basic education for all children of school-going age free of charge. The right of the population to Universal Basic Education is a concept that has a theoretical background derived from the international consideration of education as a basic human right and need as well as an analysis of education as a significant input into socio-economic development (UNESCO, 2015). UBE programmes are meant to ensure that every child, regardless of his/her socio-economic status, should be provided with basic education, including literacy, numeracy and life skills. This precludes that every government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and Universal basic education to every child of primary and junior secondary school age and also making it mandatory for parents to ensure that his child or wards attends and complete his primary and junior secondary school. (UBE ACT 2004). Such programs are generally embedded in international education initiatives, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where the signatory countries committed to providing education for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

In this regard, several countries have adopted their own unique UBE policies for their respective population's education needs, to different effects. To arrest the fast-declining standard of education and abysmal enrolment rates, especially at primary and junior secondary schools, the Nigerian government formulated and implemented the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in 1999. The main goal of this policy is to make education that children aged between 6 to 15 years free and compulsory; this includes both primary and junior secondary education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017). This initiative also seeks to decrease the prevalence of children who are not in school and increase literacy and parity between male and female education. To achieve these objectives, the following have been noted to be the major policy measures under the UBE policy; School facility construction and rehabilitation, teacher qualifications and employment, provision of instructional aids and teaching/learning equipment.

As it has been earlier noted, Nigeria's UBE policy is all-encompassing in a way since it has attempted to address many problems that are associated with education. It encompasses three main components: namely access, quality and equity. First, the policy aims at sending back-to-school intents to remove school fees and expanding the school facilities most importantly in the rural and hard-to-reach regions. Second, it focuses on the enhancement of education quality through the support of the teaching fellowship, the offering of grants for the improvement of curricula and the expansion of copyrights (Moloi & Isike, 2011). Third, there is a commitment to equity in the policy where children-especially girl children and those from less privileged background-have an opportunity to achieve progressive education to complete basic education.

Thus, the role played by the UBE policy in the Nigerian educational system cannot be overemphasized. In this respect, the policy plays an overall role of a guiding framework to the country's educational needs and challenges especially in as much as they concern; access and quality. Nigeria is among the world's most populous countries with out-of-school children, millions of children especially girls do not have access to school because of poverty illiteracy and other socio-economic factors (World Bank 2020). UBE policy is therefore a vital tool for reversing these trends and ensuring that education becomes a reality for all children in Nigeria. In addition, as the UBE policy supports international education goals and objectives, it has a significant function of placing Nigeria within the co-ordinate of the rest of the world about the achievement of universal education.

Primary education is the first cycle of studies that starts at the age of 6 years and takes 5-6 years depending on the country. It is accepted worldwide as the basic aspect on which learning is informed (Etor, Mbon and Ekanem, 2013). Primary education is, however, crucial as it prepares children with major skills like reading,

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue V May 2025

writing, arithmetic and basic problem-solving for everyday life and other subsequent education. It is also used in the teaching and learning process to develop the cognitive skills of children as well as to enable the abilities related to interacting with others in a group (GGI Insights, 2024). Human capital development starts with primary education all over the world as it establishes the foundation for children to become valuable assets to the economy and society. There cannot be any overemphasis on the importance of primary education in the life of a child. The early years of children are without a doubt the most developmental, as these years lay the foundation in terms of skills and knowledge required in children's future. To achieve these goals, primary education provides lessons in the main school subjects with an emphasis on moral standards, socially appropriate behaviours, as well as physical health of the child (UNICEF, 2020). According to Heckman (2011), quality education in the early grades has a positive impact on a child's performance in other grade levels, employment, and political participation. This means that primary education plays a significant factor in reducing poverty and helping a person change their situation for the better.

In global education systems, primary education is also quite important. Many international declarations, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, have affirmed it as a basic right, which has widespread recognition. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—particularly SDG 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"—have furthered the global emphasis on universal access to primary education (United Nations, 2015). Globally, governments have created laws to provide free and mandatory elementary education, since it is considered the most efficient means of fostering equitable possibilities for kids, irrespective of their financial status.

Primary education is particularly crucial for economic and social growth in low- and middle-income nations, where education is viewed as a vital instrument for advancing a country's development. Research shows that greater spending on elementary education is associated with better health outcomes, lower inequality, and economic growth (Ehigiamusoe, 2013; Jelilov, Aleshinloye and Önder, 2016). Countries can narrow the socioeconomic disparities that impede growth by guaranteeing all children access to high-quality education. To put it briefly, basic education is essential for the development of the individual as well as for the formation of economies and society.

In most nations across the world, the government is one of the main funders of education. Public school funding is one of the main responsibilities of the government (Hall, 2013). Within the education sector, government financing pertains to the monetary assistance given by federal, state, or local governments to guarantee the upkeep and enhancement of educational establishments (Hall, 2013). This money is essential for keeping up school facilities, paying teachers' wages, supplying teaching resources, and assisting with educational initiatives. It is essential to guarantee that all children, irrespective of their financial status, have access to education. Primary education is particularly vulnerable to differences in access and quality, especially in low- and middle-income nations. For this reason, adequate funding is especially crucial.

Usually, there are several sources of government support for education. Income taxes, corporation taxes, and consumption taxes collected by the government make up the majority of the tax revenue. According to Cronjé et al. (2015) and the OECD (2017), some countries also heavily rely on grants and foreign aid from development partners to fund education. This is particularly the case in developing countries where private sector resources may be scarce. For instance, a lot of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, especially the rural and underprivileged ones, depend on foreign assistance to augment their educational programs. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are another way that governments may make money. Under PPPs, the private sector finances education in exchange for specific benefits.

Determining how government funds are distributed to different areas of the education system depends on the budgeting procedure for education (Onyimadu, 2020). Priorities are often determined by the government using its national development plan and policy objectives as a basis for the budgeting process. These goals direct how money is distributed to elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions, among other educational levels (OECD, 2016). Though this differs by nation, governments generally seek to devote a sizeable portion of their national budgets to education. For instance, to achieve sustainable development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) advises that nations devote at least 15-20% of their national budgets to education (UNESCO, 2015). In many cases, however, countries struggle to meet this benchmark due to competing demands from other sectors such as health, defense, and infrastructure.

Government money for education is disbursed through a variety of methods, all of which are intended to guarantee accountability and openness. The government ministries or education agencies that oversee the distribution of funds are usually in charge of providing funding to educational institutions, instructors, and curricula. This frequently entails building and maintaining school buildings, giving out textbooks and other educational resources, and paying teachers' and administrative salaries (World Bank, 2018). Furthermore, governments may undertake targeted programs, such as school lunch programs or scholarship programs, to remove obstacles that prevent underprivileged people from attending school.

Financial resources must be used effectively and for the desired goals for financing for education to be managed effectively (World Bank, 2024). Unfortunately, corruption, improper funding distribution, and ineffective bureaucratic procedures are commonplace issues in many nations, especially in developing nations (Nwafor, Uchendu & Akani, 2015). These issues make it difficult to employ education money properly. Inadequate learning materials, a lack of teachers, and ill-equipped schools are all consequences of these problems that might lower educational standards.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this paper is human capital theory. Economic theorists like Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker established this idea, which is extremely pertinent to comprehend the value of education spending and how public money affects the accessibility and quality of primary education. According to the Human Capital Theory, investing in education may pay off in the long run for both individuals and society at large. One of the theory's most important proponents, Becker (1964), maintained that education raises people's earning capacity and productivity, which promotes economic growth. Expanding on this concept, Schultz (1961) explained that human capital, or the abilities, knowledge, and skills obtained by education, plays a vital role in the growth of a country since it has a direct impact on worker productivity and the overall state of the economy.

The foundation of the human capital theory is the notion that investing in education may benefit both people and governments in terms of economic consequences. People become more productive via the acquisition of information and skills, which opens up greater work options and increases salaries. Societies gain from this as much as individuals since educated labour spurs innovation and economic growth. Seen in this light, education is considered a necessary kind of capital, similar to financial or physical capital (money, infrastructure, and machinery).

Building a nation's human capital is essentially what governments that invest in education do, especially at the elementary level. Because elementary education establishes the groundwork for subsequent learning and skill development, this investment is essential. Accordingly, nations possessing robust educational institutions and sufficient government funding often experience increased economic growth, decreased rates of poverty, and enhanced social cohesiveness (Schultz, 1961). Therefore, as a way of promoting long-term economic and social growth, government policies that prioritise financing for basic education are amply supported by Human Capital Theory.

When discussing Nigeria's UBE policy and international trends in education spending, Human Capital Theory is a valuable tool. To develop Nigeria's human capital, the UBE strategy seeks to expand access to basic education. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2017), the strategy aims to guarantee that every kid, irrespective of their financial status, may get the fundamental skills required for future success by offering free and mandatory education. The seminar paper emphasizes that the UBE policy's success has been restricted by finance and implementation issues. If Nigeria doesn't spend enough on education, it runs the danger of undervaluing its human capital, which might result in weak economic development and long-term poverty.

Nigeria may learn a lot from nations that have effectively invested heavily in basic education and built their people capital. As an illustration, Finland and South Korea have continuously allocated a sizable portion of their GDP to education, guaranteeing that their citizens have access to top-notch education (OECD, 2016). As a result, many nations have experienced significant gains in social stability and economic prosperity from their investments. The Human Capital Theory explains why these nations have made funding for education a top priority: they understand that investing in human capital has far more advantages than expenses since a well-educated populace is the cornerstone of a rich and creative society.

Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz's Human Capital Theory offers a convincing framework for comprehending the significance of public investment in education. It is extremely pertinent to debates regarding Nigeria's UBE policy and international trends in education financing because it highlights the significance that education plays in producing a productive workforce and stimulating economic growth. Nigeria has to solve the financial and execution issues of the UBE policy to fully realize the potential of its human capital. The country should also learn from global best practices to guarantee that every kid has access to high-quality elementary education.

Global Trends in the Funding of Primary Education

Ensuring that all children, irrespective of their socio-economic situation, have access to basic school and delivering high-quality education requires government support. The amount and administration of government financing determine the standard of infrastructure, the accessibility of educational resources, teacher pay, and other critical resources required for the efficient delivery of education (Nwafor et al., 2015; Nwaham, 2023; Azi and Usman, 2023). Inadequate finance makes it difficult for educational systems to achieve their objectives and causes gaps in quality and access between groups or areas.

In many countries, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies collaborate to secure sustainable funding mechanisms. By examining the policies of countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, China, India, and Ghana, we gain insight into the global trends in funding primary education.

United Kingdom (UK)

The principle of the funding policies of the UK government relative to education financing is anchored on the belief that all students should be given an equal opportunity to attain quality education. An important characteristic of this approach is that the Department for Education (DfE) must spearhead it by sitting at the helm of the issuance of national policies and deciding on the funds that should be granted to local authorities and schools (Department for Education, 2021). In the UK, primary education funding is a devolved matter which means that the funding for schools is provided by the central government through grants to local authorities of the schools under their management. In contrast, the central government uses methods such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to ensure that the funding is fairly distributed across different schools and local authorities.

The National Funding Formula (NFF) was implemented in England in 2018 to improve funding distribution and minimize variations across the country. This model targets deprived sectors and seeks to reduce the difference in the learning progress of children from poor and rich families (Roberts, 2022). This focus on equity has made the country an example for any other country in the world that aspires to establish fair education equality. Another emerging trend in the context of the United Kingdom is the efforts to ensure the importance of early years education as the primary period for effective intervention. For instance, the UK government through programs like the Early Years Pupil Premium offers funds for children originating from poor households (Blanden et al., 2019). This is in line with global policies that aim at equal distribution of funds to the less fortunate to enhance equity in schools.

United States of America

Public financing of primary education in the United States remains partly centralized but mainly decentralized with the local, state, and federal governments exercising their separate roles. Local property taxes fund a large part of the costs, which results in considerable disparities in educational standards from one district to another,

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue V May 2025

depending on the local tax resources. Critics have noted that this model promotes inequity because schools in rich districts appear to be more resourceful than schools in poor districts (Baker & Corcoran, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2019). Nevertheless, the federal authorities have attempted to address the funding inequality through various policies, including Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which aimed at allocating more funds to schools with low-income students (Lafortune, Rothstein, & Schanzenbach, 2018).

Due to such sentiments, the US trend towards having Federal involvement in financing primary schooling has been gradually escalating, especially after the world economic crisis in 2008. The federal government's involvement in sustaining education funding during the financial crisis is evident in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, whereby billions of dollars were provided to support state education budgets (Jackson, Johnson and Persico, 2015). Further, recent changes like the Every Student Succeeds Act ((ESSA) of 2015 focus on accountability and try to guarantee that all students including, low-income students, also can get effective education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

These policies are in tandem with global trends where governments are adopting more centralized funding mechanisms to extend education for all children. The trend in the United States is the conflict between the local and national approaches to the problem, which is seen in many countries as they put effort into creating fair educational opportunities for all children.

Canada

Canada's mechanism of financing primary education aligns with its federal system of government where the bulk of education responsibilities lie with the provinces. Currently, all provinces and territories have their own education systems and this has led to some of them having differences in funding systems. Nevertheless, across all regions, most of the funding for primary education comes from provincial government grants raised through local property taxes (Waddington, 2018). This shared responsibility affords children basic education without charges however disparities may prevail between economically affluent regions and those that are not due to the charging of fees based on local taxes.

To address funding disparity, some provinces for example Ontario and Quebec have adopted equalization measures to enhance fairness in funding. These policies are intended to supplement the funding of schools in poor districts and equalize the funding between the rich and poor schools to ensure that they offer quality services (Herman, 2013). In addition, Canada's federal government has a role to play within the area of supporting education, particularly through transfers such as the Canada Social Transfer (CST), which is a financial assistance given to provinces and territories within the country for their social programs including education (Fisher et al, 2006).

This is in line with other countries, where governments have shifted their concern to fair funding and access to education. Building on global trends including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Canada has endeavoured to guarantee to provide quality education to all children irrespective of their status in terms of socioeconomic status (OECD, 2020). The case of Canada demonstrates that decentralised schooling can nevertheless pursue equity using selective funding strategies designed to redress regional disparities in schooling.

China

It is worthy of note that China, the most populated country in the world, has over the past few decades registered commendable progress in financing primary education. Compulsory education, which encompasses primary and junior secondary education, has been a focal area in China's development agenda. The Chinese government sources most of its funding for primary education from the local governments with the central government subsidizing these local governments to ensure that even areas with little revenues to support education are well equipped (UNESCO, 2020). This dual system is intended to provide all children with quality education regardless of location or socio-economic status (Zhou & Zhou, 2019). One of the major areas of focus in China remains the enhancement of education in rural areas, as the country has been investing a lot of money into the construction of schools, the development of teachers' professional competence, as well as grants for low-income families (Liu, 2024). This is consistent with the global paradigm of targeting rural education to address disparities in access to quality education across regions.

There has been a shift towards a more centralized fund dispersal in recent years, or at least a centralization of the distribution of funds in areas that have had limited educational resources, such as rural counties. The central government has also augmented its financial support through policies such as “Two Exemptions and One Subsidy” which covers tuition, textbook fees, and living subsidies for poor students (Du and Sun, 2015). This policy is in line with a global shift where governments are taking the mantle of funding education more so to ensure that students in poor areas are provided with the same opportunities as those in richer areas.

In addition, China has synchronized its education policies with the international standards of education, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that include quality education for all. China’s attempts to decrease the disparities in funding between rural and urban schools show direction in eradicating the inequities in education, a common problem experienced in most countries globally. These reforms not only enhance the accessibility of primary education but also promote long-term national development.

India

India’s approach to financing primary education can be seen as an indication of its development commitment as well as managing its enormous population. The focal point of the country’s primary education policy is its Right to Education (RTE) Act enacted in 2009, which emphasizes the free and compulsory education of children between ages 6 and 14 years. This legislation has propelled the government to ensure that they come up with more funding and enhance the quality of education for those groups that are most affected (Nawani & Sanyal, 2021).

The primary source of funding for education in India is through direct budgetary support from the central and state governments. This decentralization enables states to adopt abstract education spending that fits their needs without compromising on the country’s average. One of the main sources of funding is derived from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is the education flagship programme that was initiated by the Indian government in 2001 and aimed at the universalisation of elementary education. SSA has also performed a significant function in increasing primary schooling enrollment and has been instrumental in the enrolment targets, particularly in rural and disadvantaged regions (Mehrotra, 2020). India has also received considerable foreign aid in the recent past, from agencies like the World Bank and the UNICEF to strengthen its sources of financing and to counter the odds of educational disparity.

Nevertheless, as seen earlier, despite the increase in overall funding and its policy focus on elementary education, the problems associated with inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortage, and imbalance in resource distribution persist in India. It has to be pointed out, however, that despite the governmental policies aimed at funding education, millions of children have been enrolled on schools, and there are still certain deficiencies in the quality of education for all (Tilak, 2018). These challenges therefore highlight the need for continued investment and finding ways for innovative funding of education to sustain the future of India’s primary school education.

Ghana

The policy of education in Ghana is anchored on the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy started in 1995. The FCUBE policy entails the provision of free education for children right from Junior Kindergarten up to junior high school, which is nine years of basic education. This was supplemented with the Education Act of 2008 which made provisions for free basic education for all children within the territories of the Republic of Ghana (Salifu et al., 2018). Ghana’s government has been improving the annual spending for education and according to recent statistics, the share of education in the state’s budget is about 20 per cent, part of this money is spent on primary education (UNICEF 2023).

Funding for compulsory education in Ghana is mainly mobilised domestically with support from foreign partners and development partners. Thankfully, NGOs like the World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have filled this gap by supporting the government's efforts financially and

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue V May 2025

technically. Such partnerships have assisted in enhancing education facilities, training of teachers, and availability of teaching aids. The present funding system was established in 2005, which was complemented by a capitation grant system that provides schools with extra funds for every learner to facilitate non-tuition requirements (Abadzi, 2006).

Nonetheless, these improvements are still not sufficient to address equity in education, especially for rural children in the context of Ghana. Teachers' demotivation due to shortages and lack of proper structures as well as resource inequalities that exist between urban and rural schools and learners remained a challenge towards the achievement of the goals of the FCUBE. To close these gaps, more funding and the efficient use of more funding are necessary to support all children's right to quality primary education regardless of where they live or their background.

In examining these global trends in the funding of primary education, it is thus clear that there is increased emphasis on equity, access, and quality. The general assumption towards adequate and fair funding for financing primary education is a concern that remains universal despite the many differences in models and mechanisms of funding among the different countries. Many countries including the UK and Canada, for instance, use funding formulas to support equity, whereas China and India, for instance, concentrate on education in rural areas and other disadvantaged regions. However, countries in the developing world, such as Ghana, source additional funds from international organisations to fill gaps. Comparison of these civilizations' progress underscores the need for continued investment in primary education as a key to human capital development and societal transformation.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) as Primary Education Funding Model in Comparison with other Countries' Models

A cross-country comparison of some selected countries shows that while there are similarities in patterns in funding of primary education in several countries and Nigeria, there are also differences. A major component of the Nigeria Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy established in 1999 is to offer free, compulsory and quality basic education for all children. This is a commendable attempt to mitigate challenges that include low enrollment, high dropout rates, and an increased number of children not in school (Anho, 2013). Even though UBE Nigeria has certain objectives in common with other countries, the efficacy of its funding is still questionable.

Many political leaders across all countries make pledges to improve education but the reality on the ground is that the countries do not show the seriousness required regarding financial commitment. The UK, the US, Canada, China, India, Ghana, Gambia and Cameroon all of which have effectively adopted primary education policies, spend a large proportion of their national budgets on education. These countries spend resources on the construction of adequate school facilities, employing and maintaining qualified teachers, and providing schools with teaching and learning facilities (World Bank, 2018). It is important to follow this approach to develop a strong and sustainable process of education with a focus on the further progression of primary education.

On the other hand, Nigeria has demonstrated its commitment to providing infrastructure for primary education through policy reforms such as the Universal Basic Education program launched in 1999. However, the funding allocation in this country is below par with the international benchmark. The sustainable development goals of the global United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization also known as UNESCO recommended that developing countries should spend at least 15- 20% of their total national budgets on education and training, yet Nigeria has been concentrating less than 10% let alone in education and training (UNESCO, 2015). This underfunding has led to severe difficulties that include poor school infrastructure, scarcity of quality teachers, and lack of necessary learning amenities that compromise the quality of education under the UBE program (Enyiazu, 2022).

Foreign assistance remains a key source of financing education in many of the developing countries: India, Ghana and Nigeria inclusive. Donor agencies like the World Bank, GPE, and UNESCO assist these nations in supplementing the funding deficiencies (World Bank, 2018). International aid has played a significant role in funding numerous programs such as the SSA which aims at universal primary education in India (Mehrotra, 2020). Likewise, external funding supports the upgrading of school facilities and the capacity of teachers in Ghana (Salifu, 2018). External support has also played a role in the UBE program in Nigeria, especially in the training of teachers and the construction of schools in coastal areas (Nweke et al., 2020). However, this poses sustainability difficulties as such funding is normally unpredictable due to the fluctuating political and economic cycles in the donor countries (Wangwe, 2006). This makes it difficult for countries like Nigeria to rely on external support in the context of long-term planning in education.

While compared to countries such as the UK, Canada, and the US, the most significant and unique feature of education funding in Nigeria is its non-sustainability. The findings also indicated that in high-income countries, the largest source of education sector funding is domestic tax revenue, which is more predictable (OECD, 2016). This means that funding of education systems is locally sourced, which reduces vulnerability to external economic conditions or shifts in political regimes. These countries also practice intense accountability in their provision and usage of funds for improving education results through turnover audits.

Nigeria's education funding vulnerability therefore arises from the fact that it relies on oil revenues and thus any changes in the prices of oil affect its funding for education. When the price of oil significantly goes down, the government withdraws subsidies to areas such as education which compounds the challenges facing the underfunded UBE program (Elwerfelli & Benhin, 2018; Manasseh et al., 2019). Additionally, the decentralized nature of Nigeria's UBE policy, which requires state and local governments to contribute to education funding, has led to uneven implementation across the country. Poorer states, especially those with limited resources, struggle to meet their funding obligations, resulting in disparities in education quality between different regions (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017).

Yet, corruption and inefficiency in the management of the funds worsen the sustainability of education funding in Nigeria. Reports have indicated that a large percentage of the funds earmarked for the education sector are either misappropriated or poorly managed, hence posing an impediment to the execution of the UBE program (Mohammad, 2023). This has been compounded by chronic underfunding, a situation that has put Nigeria in a very unfavourable position to the achievement of the goals of the UBE policy, let alone the provision of quality education for all children.

Therefore, whereas nations like the UK, the US, Canada, China, India, and Ghana have significantly enhanced their commitment to funding their primary education systems via local and international resources, Nigeria's UBE program remains an issue. The challenges of underfunding education in the country, reliance on volatile oil revenue, and the general questionability of leadership regarding corruption and poor governance do not allow the country to provide the stable and sustainable additional funding necessary for improving the quality of primary education. For Nigeria to meet her education targets, there is a need to raise her education budget, enhance governance and accountability, and promote domestic sources of funding for education rather than dependence on external support.

In as much as capacity to implement policies, several countries that perform well in primary education like South Korea and Japan have put in place efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to enhance the implementation of education policies as recommended by the World Trade Organization. These countries benchmark their students' performance and policy impact frequently, allowing for contingently informed changes in efficiency and effectiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). On the other hand, the effective implementation of the UBE policy in Nigeria faces the challenges of poor accountability and corruption, which in turn compromises the appropriate disbursement of funds for education. Due to the inadequate development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the intended impacts have not been realized, including equitable and quality basic education for all. Therefore, the desired objective of the UBE program has not been achieved, as most Nigerian children, especially those in rural settings, have limited chances to attend quality schools (Ogunode and Chinwuba, 2022).

A second factor that threatens the implementation of the UBE policy is the shortage of professional teachers. According to various studies, the quality of teachers as one of the main inputs of the education system is a critical determinant of the performance of education systems around the world. In some countries such as

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XII Issue V May 2025

Singapore, teachers follow professional learning, and the teaching career is cherished and remunerated, and therefore it has enhanced performance (Darling-Hammond, 2017). While the program implemented might be laudable, many teachers under the UBE program in Nigeria effectively lack the training and the right academic background to educate the masses appropriately. This has considerably impaired the capacity of the UBE policy to deliver on its intended objectives of enhancing learning achievements.

Considering the general lessons that Nigeria may learn from other countries, it can be concluded that the ability to secure constant and sufficient funding is the key to the proper implementation of any educational policy. Hence, there is consistency in the allocation and funding of primary education; Norway and Denmark, for example, dedicate a definite amount of their nation's budget towards education (OECD, 2019). Similarly, Nigeria could take a solid step by developing a sustainable model of funding for education that would ensure adequate and stable financing for the UBE program. This would include not only providing adequate funding for education but also using the funds in the most efficient and accountable way possible. Also, it would be relevant for Nigeria to focus on the improvement of the quality of its teacher training programs. Any country that has experienced success in its system of learning provides generous funding for the process of training teachers. For instance, in Finland, the government makes certain that every teacher who is practising must possess a master's degree While in South Korea, teachers are allowed to practice only if they undergo professional development when they are hired and for the entire time they will be practising (Sahlberg, 2011).

Nigeria can also employ similar methods by setting up compulsory, continuous and professional courses for teachers to enhance their quality, knowledge and competency in embracing advanced techniques. One of them is a lesson on accountability in public education as well as the involvement of the general population. Some countries like South Korea and Finland engage the parents and communities in the educational process hence fostering ownership of the education system outcomes (OECD, 2016). Nigeria can also learn from such practices by promoting the involvement of communities in the running of schools and also putting in place checks to gauge the effectiveness of educational policies within communities. This can assist in the early detection of challenges with implementation and prompt actions to have the implementation enhanced.

Nigeria can make use of the international policies of education that champion the inclusion of disabled persons. Some of the policies in such countries as Norway and Canada for example can guarantee standard education to kids regardless of their origins. This comprises of quota for disabled children and for children of the less privileged in society (UNESCO, 2015). The government of Nigeria can improve on its UBE policy by incorporating another form of policy where policy formulation and implementation shall target the vulnerable children in the society so that no child is left behind regarding basic education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the current review of government policies on funding of primary education across the globe and with particular reference to Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy, much effort has been made by Nigeria aimed at solving the challenges in the country's education system but the country remains below the average in most important aspects. Despite the noble aims and objectives of the UBE policy, which is to offer free compulsory education to children of school-going age, the following problems persistently trailed UBE policy: inadequate funding, poor facilities/ infrastructure, unqualified teachers, and geographical inequalities in access to education. These challenges have greatly limited the achievement of the UBE policy objectives in Nigeria and out-of-school children in Nigeria are among the highest in the world.

As highlighted in this paper, the evaluation of Nigeria's UBE policy against comparable international practices shows that much work still has to be done to ensure that the education system in Nigeria meets the standard of those other countries. Finland, South Korea, and Canada have very effective primary education systems where more resources are used in education, there's equal distribution of resources, and high expectations for teachers' training and school facilities. Nigeria can borrow a lot from these countries especially on how funding for education should be done, protected with sustainable sources and the system made more inclusive and accountable at every level.

To improve the effectiveness of Nigeria's UBE policy and bring it closer to global standards, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Increase and Sustain Education Funding: The government of Nigeria should ensure that a higher percentage of its national budget is spent on education as the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has encouraged that at least 15-20% of the national budget should be spent on education. Also, the funding should be continued and fairly distributed for all states with a focus on the underrepresented areas.

2. Enhance Teacher Training and Quality: Teacher quality is an important factor that leads to improved education achievement. Another strategy that needs to be adopted by the Nigerian government is to enhance and expand on teacher professional development to make sure that teachers are adequately prepared for their jobs and that they are always updated on the current progressive approaches to teaching. The regulations for the certification processes for teachers in a particular country should be uniform and the recognized processes should be implemented consistently.

3. Improve School Infrastructure: Schools, especially those in rural areas, do not have adequate facilities which have a bearing on learning. The government should provide funds for the construction and upgrade of adequate learning institutions to ensure that the students get appropriate learning facilities without any compromise.

4. Promote Accountability and Transparency: This situation strongly indicates that education funds should be managed with a higher level of accountability to minimize corruption and misappropriation of funds. Regular supervision and participation of communities in monitoring and evaluation of the policies on education will help in the implementation of the resources granted.

5. Target Vulnerable Groups: Extra measures should be taken for equal education for the children in the rural areas, girls and children with disabilities. This could encompass such areas as scholarship programmes, school feeding programmes and other alleviation programmes to enhance access to education.

6. Leverage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): It may be necessary for the Nigerian government to woo more public-private partnerships that will augment government efforts in education financing. The involvement of the private sector can assist in securing additional funds that can support education, bring new ideas to learning institutions and enhance the quality of services being provided by schools.

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