

ASSESSMENT OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UBE PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DUTSIN-MA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the teachers' assessment of principals' leadership experience on the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina. The study was guided by three objectives and three research questions. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 11 public junior secondary school principals and 173 teachers. The sample of the study consisted of seven (7) principals' and one hundred and eight (108) teachers totaling one hundred and fifteen (115) randomly selected as a sample size using a simple random sampling technique. A 30-item self-developed and experts validated questionnaire titled "Influence of principal's leadership experience on the implementation of UBE programme scale (IPLEIUBEPS)" was used for data collection. The logical consensus of the experts after the validation of the instrument yielded 0.81% as index of rational validity. The instrument yielded 0.85 as reliability coefficient of internal consistency. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference between principals' leadership experience and the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. The study concluded that few inexperienced principals are posted to UBE schools in Katsina state and most facilities for implementing the UBE programme were not adequately provided in almost the UBE schools in Katsina state. The study, therefore, recommends that state governments need to legislate new laws/guidelines for the appointment of experienced junior secondary school principals.

Keywords: Assessment, principals, leadership experience, implementation.

Introduction

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It encompasses formal schooling, informal learning experiences, and even the transmission of culture. Education aims to develop individuals holistically, preparing them for life as productive citizens by fostering both knowledge and character (Yamma & Danjuma, 2018). The National Policy on Education in Nigeria outlines Universal Basic Education (UBE) as a free, compulsory, and nine-year education program. This encompasses six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education, alongside adult and non-formal education programs at those levels. The policy emphasizes that the government is responsible for providing this education, and parents are obligated to ensure

their children complete it (FGN, 2013). Also, the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, specifically the 2013 edition, emphasizes Universal Basic Education (UBE) as a cornerstone for national development and individual empowerment. It mandates free, compulsory, and universal basic education for all Nigerian children of school age, encompassing early childhood care and development (ECCD) and nine years of formal schooling (6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary). This policy is further strengthened by the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 (FGN, 2013). The UBE programme aims to provide six years of primary education and three years of further secondary education to reduce the high level of illiteracy in the country. The Nigerian government wants to provide quality basic education to its citizens in line with the global trend. Various educational policies have been put in place in the past due to the failure of educational programs observed in Nigeria over the years which led to the creation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria (Egbo, 2021). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program was established in Nigeria on September 30, 1999 by the former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (Yamma & Danjuma, 2018).

The objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria are to ensure all Nigerian children have access to free and compulsory basic education, reduce dropout rates, and equip them with essential life skills. Specifically, UBE aims to provide nine years of formal basic education, encompassing primary and junior secondary levels. The program also focuses on fostering a strong national consciousness for education and promoting scientific and technological advancement (FGN, 2013).

However, the Act established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to manage the implementation of UBE through the State Universal Education Board (SUBEB) in each state and local government in Nigeria (Akinniyi, 2015). Abah and Victor (2021) verified that the UBE programme was designed to be free and mandatory for all children at the level of basic education; however, the programme still faces implementation challenges. The failure of the school principals to effectively implement the UBE program due to inadequate leadership training and professional development programme and insufficient funding to implement the programme is a significant concern among other burning issues. The focus of school leadership on national development is indisputable (Nakpodia, 2020).

The concept of principals' leadership experience refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that principals develop over the course of their careers in education. It includes both formal training and experience gained through on-the-job learning. Principals' leadership experience is important because it can help them become more effective leaders and administrators (Oluwole, & Fanan, 2019). It can also help them build relationships with teachers, staff, parents, and community members, which can in turn support students' learning and achievement. Being a school principal involves many responsibilities that must be well performed to ensure optimal productivity. The principals must positively influence professional development as they provide vision for learning, support collaborative change, and discuss professional inquiry with teachers. Teachers who work in a stimulating and

supportive environment, can achieve higher levels of professional development (Yakubu & Lawal, 2024).

Implementation is the act of carrying out an already established plan. Implementation simply means the execution of a plan, project, decision, proposal, objective, agreement, policy or idea (Salihu & Hazri, (2015). It is the foundation of any plan, the determinant of its success or failure. It is the driving force of any plan without which a plan, is just a good intention (Mvendaga, 2015). Therefore, UBE Programme Implementation refers to a process and a series of activities that aim to give life to a dormant to function for the achievement of certain educational goals. The UBE Programme Implementation includes putting into practice the curricula programmes, subjects and other activities officially defined in relation to the policy document of the universal basic education programme.

Implementation is the execution of a designed programme in the way it was planned. The UBE was created to develop a strong educational awareness among citizens, provide free and compulsory basic education, respond to the needs of school dropouts, reduce the incidence of dropping out of the formal school system and ensure an adequate level of reading and writing skills (Onele, 2014). To effectively achieve all these goals, implementation and strategic planning are crucial. Implementation is done in urban and rural areas. Stakeholders at all levels should be included in the planning and implementation (Ordu & Nwamadi-Wosu, 2019).

According to Adamu and Adole (2015), the concept of implementation inevitably takes different shapes and forms. In Nigeria, implementation can also be regarded as the graveyard of many good policies due to corruption, sentiments, or dearth of necessary resources. Nwangwa (2020) posits that poor planning has also greatly hindered implementation. Thus, an important key to this problem is the determination of factors that may affect the process of actualizing intended goals and objectives. Successful implementation of the UBE programme largely depends on a number of factors. Not only must children enroll in schools, but there must also be good facilities and structures put in place. The teachers who are the key implementers of the programme must be qualified and committed to the programme, while the government is responsible for providing the necessary foundation for the programme continuity. According to Idehen and Izevbigie (2015), for the UBE programme to succeed, there are fundamental factors to be considered. These include the teacher, infrastructural facilities, instructional materials and funds.

The objectives of the Universal Basic Education include among other things, the provision of universal access to basic education, the provision of a conducive learning environment, eradication of illiteracy as well as the ability to communicate effectively. The objectives also include laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking, development of sound attitudes, giving every child the opportunity of developing manipulative skills that would enable him or her function effectively in the society (Babalola, 2020). Since the Universal Basic Education scheme includes the public Junior secondary schools, the National policy on Education stipulated the objectives of junior secondary schools to include effective

thinking, communication skills, making of relevant judgment, making the pupil a useful member of one's family, understanding basic facts about health and sanitation and understanding and appreciating one's role as a useful member of the country (FGN, 2013).

The aim of the UBE programme was further upheld by some scholars, Okoro in Aja, et al., (2016); Shaturaev, (2021); Araromi, (2017) and Jacob, (2020) pointed out that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) as a reform programme has the following features; Free formal education; compulsory, uninterrupted nine years of primary and junior secondary school education; Provision of mid-day meals to enhance children's access, retention and completion of the school circle; Emphasis on curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations; Separation of junior secondary school from senior secondary schools (Kpangban, 2018). Realignment/integration of junior secondary schools with primary education; Individualized teaching methods; Introduction of rudiments of computer literacy; Appropriate continuous teacher professional development; and community ownership of schools, including participation in decision making in schools (Onyinyechi, Alumode, & Ogbonnia, 2022). Basic education has therefore been acknowledged as the foundation for sustainable lifelong learning (Asuru, 2006). It is based upon which all other educational endeavours and worthwhile life goals are built, because it provides the basic reading, writing and numeracy, skills for effective functioning in society.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian Junior secondary schools face many leadership challenges. Stakeholders continue to criticize junior secondary school principals' leadership administration. The way school principals' operate their schools leads to friction. Many schools are failing because they lack strong leadership, insufficient fund and adequate infrastructure. Moreover, the principals leadership experience further compounds the problem, compromising the implementation of UBE programme in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Additionally, poor infrastructure maintenance exacerbates the situation, as schools need more facilities for effective teaching and learning and also insufficient encouragement for the staff.

It is also observed that many students, especially from rural areas failed to enroll in school or drop out because of poverty, parents apathy, distance of school, many parents willing to train their wards bear the associated costs of committing their children to school. All these are challenges for the effective implementation of UBE programme in the LGA. Consequently, after so many years of existence of the UBE programme, young children are still roaming around on the streets begging and hawking during school hours. School dropout cases appear to remain intractable. Teachers also are dissatisfied with their remuneration and condition of service in addition to poor or inadequate provision of teaching and learning facilities like libraries and laboratory equipment, books among others. It is against this background that this study investigated the assessment of principals leadership experiences on the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to determine the principals' leadership experiences on the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. Examine teachers' assessment of principals' leadership experience on the implementation of universal basic education programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria.
2. Investigate the level of universal basic education programme implementation in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of teachers' assessment of principals' leadership experience on the implementation of universal basic education programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of universal basic education programme implementation between urban and rural public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study investigated teachers' assessment of principals' leadership experiences on the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to carry out the study. The population of the study comprised of 11 principals and 173 teachers drawn from 11 public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria, which constitute a total population of one hundred and eighty four (184) teachers. The sample of study was made up of 7 principals drawn from 11 UBE junior secondary schools and 108 teachers. In total, the sample size for the study consisted of 115 respondents. Random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. However, respondents were randomly selected using simple proportionate sampling technique. The researcher adopted questionnaire titled "Assessment of Principal Leadership Experience on the Implementation of UBE Programme in Public Junior Secondary Schools" (TAPLEIUBEPJSS) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire consist of Sections A, B and C. Section A elicit bio-data information of the teachers. Furthermore, section B of the instrument which contains 30 items was constructed based on principal leadership experience on the implementation of UBE Programme (Ossai, 2022). The content validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the instrument to criticism by experts in the field of educational management as well as measurement and evaluation. The experts judged how the items in the

instruments truly represent the content and specific objectives the topic sets to achieve. The experts' observations were effected in the items. They also judged the items in terms of content coverage, relevance and content clarity of language and wordings. The validity index of 0.80%, and 0.81% with average validity index of 0.81% was obtained. The reliability of the instrument was determined through pilot testing with the reliability index of 0.87. The research questions were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of teachers' assessment of principals' leadership experience on the implementation of universal basic education programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area?

Table 1: Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of Principals' leadership experience on the implementation of Basic Education programme.

Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
1-3yrs	24	21%	89.20	9.40
4-6yrs	30	26%	92.33	10.61
7yrs and above	61	53%	97.87	11.98
Total	115	100%		

Table 1 above shows the mean and standard deviations (SD) of principals leadership experience of 1-3yrs is 89.20 and 9.40 respectively with the frequency of 30 and percentage of (26%), while that of 4-6yrs mean of 92.33 and SD of 10.61 with the frequency of 24 (21%). However, the mean and SD of principals' leadership experience of 7yrs and above is 97.87 and 11.98 with the frequency of 61 and the percentage of (53%). This implies that principals with 4-6yrs of leadership experience perform better in the UBE programme implementation in the UBE public junior secondary schools in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the level of universal basic education programme implementation in urban and rural schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria

Table 2: Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation on urban and rural implementation of UBE programme.

Location	F	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Rural	34	30%	94.44	11.94
Urban	81	70%	97.09	12.11
Total	115	100%		

Table 2 shows the mean of assessment of both UBE rural and urban schools that clearly indicated that UBE rural junior secondary schools has 94.44, with the SD of 11.94, with the

frequency of 34 and the percentage of (30%), while UBE urban schools with the mean of 97.09, with the SD of 12.11, with the frequency of 34 and the percentage of (30%), while the urban public junior secondary schools has the mean of 97.09, with the standard deviation of 12.11, with the frequency of 81 and the percentage of 70%. The implication is that the principals of urban public junior secondary schools performed better in the implementation of UBE Programme across the UBE public junior secondary schools in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that majority (53%) of the principals have 4-6yrs as their experience while 61% of the principals have leadership experience between 7yrs and above. This finding was impressive, as it indicated that virtually 21% of the principals have 1-3yrs leadership experience. The findings also revealed that there is a significant difference in principals' years of leadership experience and the implementation of UBE programme in public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. This agrees with the assertion of Yakubu and Lawal, (2024) in their study which revealed that there is a significant influence of principals' years of experience and UBE implementation.

This finding is in line with Kpangban (2018), Ordu, & Nwamadi-Wosu, (2019) studies which revealed that principals' years of experience significantly influenced their leadership effectiveness; the more experienced principals performed better than the less experienced ones in UBE programme implementation.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of implementation of UBE programme between urban and rural public junior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria. This findings is in line with Nakpodia, (2020) and Onyinyechi, Alumode and Ogbonnia (2022) in their study which showed that there is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers' implementation of universal basic education programme in junior secondary schools and there is no significant difference between the averages in the implementation of UBE in the rural and urban junior secondary school in the Southeast. This finding also disagrees with the findings of Salihu and Hazri, (2015) which revealed that the implementation of the UBE programme by urban teachers was significant compared to those in rural areas.

Conclusion

From the results of the findings, there were significant differences between the principals' experiences in their leadership role performance. It was concluded that most facilities for implementing the UBE programme were not available, qualified teachers were used in implementing the UBE programme in the Dutsin-Ma local Government but the manpower is inadequate. Universal basic education board has not done much in giving access to free basic education to school age children in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. It was

also concluded that principals need adequate years of experience to be able to withstand challenges. The principals are expected to be more focused on being educational leaders, which means being professionals in teaching and learning processes and to creating or provide an environment that facilitates these activities. This, therefore, sums that UBE schools principals should possess experience in leadership to effectively implementation the UBE programme efficiently.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations:

1. State government through the universal education board should establish regular structured professional development programmes to enhance principals' leadership capacities, with focus on programme implementation, instructional leadership and stakeholders' engagement.
2. Katsina state ministry of education and UBE school principals should intensify efforts in effectively supervising, monitoring, and evaluating the universal basic education programme system involving teachers and local education authorities and local communities as well in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government.
3. State universal basic board should align school-level policies, resource allocation and classroom supervision with the goals of the UBE programme, including universal access, equity and quality education.
4. UBE board should organise seminars, conferences and workshop to train and retrain UBE principals and teachers in UBE programme implementation across the state.

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