

EDO STATE BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR TRANSFORMATION: REPOSITIONING TEACHERS FOR SMART SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA.

IBHAFIDON, HENRY ETUAMEN & OMOKHOMION VICTORY

Department of curriculum and instruction, Ambrose Alli university, Ekpoma.

dribhafidonhenry@gmail.com

Abstract

Edo State Basic Education Sector Transformation (EDOBEST) is a bold step at transforming and repositioning basic education sector for the twenty first century job market. This paper descriptively examined this bold initiative. The study presents EdoBEST as a smart school initiative. One of the major benefits of EdoBEST is that it has improved teachers' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. The major issues and challenges were raised and discussed. The paper found out that a major concern raised by stakeholders is that the curriculum of EdoBEST that is shrouded in secrecy, to the extent that the teachers responsible for its implementation are ignorant of it. To this end teachers do not have a foreknowledge and cannot adequately prepared for lessons. Based on this, it was recommended that the curriculum be made available to the teachers and the citizens of the state.

Keywords: Edo State, Basic Education, Sector Transformation, Repositioning, Teachers, Smart Schools

Introduction

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a programme introduced as a bold step by the federal government of Nigeria as a measure towards raising the quality of education at the basic level of education (primary 1-6 and JSS 1-3). Nigeria attributed a considerable importance to the education of her citizen, especially children since education has been seen as means of steering towards the realization of their needs and aspirations. In an attempt to revitalize and universalize education and make it functional for the citizens, former president Olusegun Obasanjo on September 30th, 1999 made education one of his priorities and launched the UBE programme which was in line with the world declaration on education for all (Ayodele, 2020). Universal Basic Education is assumed to be a starting point where acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitude and values can be transmitted to all school going age children so as to develop to their full capacity where they will be useful to themselves and the society.

The UBE Act of 2004 as opined by Irigoyen (2017) emphasized the objectives of UBE as follows:

- i. to universalize access to basic education
- ii. to create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and eradicate illiteracy within shortest possible time
- iii. contribute to the development of the society
- iv. develop in the entire citizen a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
- v. provide free and compulsory universal education
- vi. reduce drastically dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.

- vii. to ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundation for lifelong learning.

The Act was formerly passed into law in 2004 though the policy was launched in 1999 in the city of Sokoto. The act known as the Universal Basic education (UBE) revolutionized basic education provision in Nigeria. The UBE was launched as a way of countering the factors that hindered the attainment of the objectives of past attempts at universalizing education in the country such as Universal Primary Education (UPE). UBE, is a unique programme that makes the education of the child both free and compulsory. It is also made provision for nine years of continuous schooling. Unlike other past policies made in the country, the UBE was mandatory and defaulting parents and guardians have punitive measures against them for refusal to make their children and wards available for the programs. Since educational provision is on the concurrent list in Nigeria, the Act has to be domesticated by all the federating states.

To this effect, Edo State government domesticated the Act in 2005 and established the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). This law formerly provided nine years free and compulsory education in the state (section 2.1). The law among other things provided for the continuous development of teachers to be in line with the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). Section 8b of the policy states that since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.” In line with this provision of the national policy on education, the state government has been providing training programmes for teachers in form of seminars and workshops on a regular basis. Teachers are trained in all aspects of pedagogical delivery; such as new and innovative teaching styles and approaches as well as digital classroom procedures. This is in line with the vision of Edo State government transformation agenda and bold steps to raise and improve the standard of education in order to be globally competitive, the state will prepare all the youths in state to enter the job market with the right skills to become productive and fulfilled citizens.

Consequently, in recognition of the evolving fourth industrial revolution, the skills needed in the local and global marketplace are rapidly changing and it is our responsibility according to the governor of Edo State; to ensure that our youths are ready to meet these changing demands (Obaseki 2023). We are committed to ensuring that our youths are prepared and trained to meet these changing needs. Skills such as digital, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and creativity are increasingly in demand,” he concluded.

Consequently, as part of the efforts to counter some of the factors which are known to have hindered the achievement of the past programmes introduced by Nigerian government towards the development of primary education such as Universal Primary Education (UPE), the Edo State government decided to develop two major areas that are essential to the growth and development of basic education in Nigeria. The area includes; repositioning of teachers and the infrastructural facilities in all their basic schools in the state through the introduction of Edo State Basic Education Sector Transformation (EdoBEST) programme.

It is a fact that the reason why many laudable educational initiatives and innovations failed in the past was because they failed to take due account of the teacher’s factor. For any educational programme to be successful, teacher must be an integral part of the process, right from conceptualisation through planning and implementation. This is in recognition of the fact that

teachers are the kernel of education any day, anytime and anywhere. However, this has been the bane of many previous educational initiatives in Nigeria. As laudable as the objectives of UBE programme in Nigeria are if the teachers are not equipped with the right

knowledge and skills together with up to date infrastructure the learners may not acquire the basic learning needs which includes; literacy and numeracy, general knowledge, skills acquisition and right attitudes which each learner required to survive and develop their capabilities, live and work in dignity.

The EdoBEST Initiative in UBE programme

Nigeria has the highest population in Africa, presently Nigeria has over 200 million people and almost 13 million children are out of school even before the COVID-19 crisis (World Bank). During COVID some states in Nigeria roll out different educational programmes to engage the students during the lockdown period, state like Lagos, Oyo, Osun and Edo came to limelight. Precisely in April, 2018 the Edo State government in collaboration with World Bank and Bridge International Academies established the Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation (EdoBEST) to provide quality and affordable education to Edo children. The Edo State government realised that there is a huge gap in education especially at the lower level which include the primary and junior secondary schools. The children at this level are not equip with skills in numeracy or literacy that make them employable, useful to themselves and the society. For the government to improve on the state of education, they decided to come up with a fundamental approach by re-examine the foundation of educational system, studied the learners and the challenges faced in the course of teaching and learning and provides possible solution to the identified problems. It was on this basis that the idea of Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation (EdoBEST) was conceived to create a friendly environment for students and teachers for learning and equip the teachers in adequate knowledge, skills and methodology to deliver the teaching. The programme also, provide adequate facilities for teachers to perform their duties effectively irrespective of their location, weather, urban or rural area. The programme decided to focus on the teachers training, acquisition of technological skills by the teachers and rapid infrastructural development in all the basic schools in the state.

Edo State government discovered that education of the state can only move forward with teachers playing important roles. Teachers were identified as critical stakeholder to achieve their aims and therefore the following are some of the aims of the programme;

- To improve Basic Education across the state
- To transform the public education system and learning outcome

Based on these, they lay emphasis on the following major areas

- ✓ Teacher capacity
- ✓ Content and learning activities
- ✓ Online learning platform
- ✓ Rapid Infrastructural development and,
- ✓ Strong data base

Basically, this new innovation in Basic Education in Edo State develops the teachers technologically; to assist learners to learn at every point either at home or in the school. Today, each teacher in Basic schools in Edo State schools has a handheld device and that handheld device can tell when a teacher

is in the class. The handle device can tell whether the teacher has completed his or her lessons for that day. This programme has improved and transformed the public education system in Basic Education across the state and the learning outcomes impressive.

Strategies adopted in EdoBEST

The following were the strategies adopted by the Edo State government in the new innovation introduce into Basic Education across the state;

- Training of 15,000 teachers across the state
- Transforming learning outcome for all the 300,000 children across the state
- To improve teacher technological skills
- To develop more skilled teaching workforce by training, supporting and motivating
- Rapid infrastructural development in Basic schools across the state

The Repositioning of Teachers

Teachers are been identify as a critical stakeholder in the developing of quality education across the globe therefore, repositioning of teachers in the areas of teaching methodology, technological advancement, training and re-training of teachers will enhance the quality of education received by the learners and also translate to better output in terms of students' performance. To achieve this, there is need for government and institutional strengthening that aimed at building the capacity of every staff, both teaching and non-teaching staff. Other essential aspect is teacher professional development and quality assurance aimed at revamping the school inspectorate division of our basic education sub-sector so that the quality assurance officers can deliver their work in an effective manner. Effective teaching requires multiplicity of cognitive, affective and psychomotor elements therefore, for effective teaching in a school system requires an intelligent knowledge-based activity that takes into cognizance teacher professionalism (Alao, et al, (2019). Functional teacher education programme prepares the teachers for good teaching activities. It has been established that, teacher is the most important element in any educational programme (National Council on Teacher Education, 1998).

Equip teachers with right frame of mind and knowledge through training and re-training programme is important because of its impact on teacher quality. Provision of quality education and maintenance of standard in our basic education is never without teacher preparation. The teacher needs to be trained to become professionally qualified to teach in the first place, what happens after the initial training goes to attest to the priority and importance accorded to the development of education. Government and stakeholders need to take concerted effort regarding teacher's development in terms of human development and infrastructural facilities to ease the transfer of knowledge and skills from the teacher to the learners.

Through the EdoBEST innovative programme in Edo State basic schools, the teacher's capacity has been enhanced across the state. One of the cardinal strategies of the programme is the training of over 15,000 teachers across the state in the use of technology to improve in their delivery in the classrooms and to improve students' academic performance. Adequate teaching skills was incorporated into the training programme to improve the teacher delivery skills to care for the individual difference of the learners across the state. Edo State government is repositioning the basic education across the state by improving the knowledge and skills of their teachers, improving and

empowering the monitoring unit to have good returns on their investment in education. Furthermore, the ministry of education provides scripted lesson in the 2022/2023 year. Scripted lessons are intended to help teachers structure lessons and ensure that key information is covered consistently

Infrastructure Facilities

To achieve quality education at all levels, teacher training and re-training is very essential but given adequate training to teacher and neglect the school infrastructure may not produce the desire result. In EdoBEST programme, there is adequate provision for infrastructure development across all the basic schools both in urban and rural areas.

Based on available records over N6 billion has been spent on the provision of infrastructure in all schools, each teacher was given a tablet to work with and teachers and students in all schools are exposed to the same content and methodology at the same time across all the schools so as to maintain uniformity in teaching and give room for proper monitoring for excellent service. With this method teachers in all basic schools in Edo State adopt the same lesson note developed centrally and all students now learn the same content.

Other areas of infrastructure that could enhance teaching and learning process was also put into consideration such as renovation of primary schools building, provision of water and good toilet facilities, provision of different types of furniture for different classes. The types of furniture given to pupils in primary one are different from those ones given to pupils in primary six. Furthermore, classrooms were painted in different colours that are appropriate to the ages of the pupils; all is to stimulate learning. Sporting facilities were renovated and sporting equipment were made available to every school and annual inter-house competition have been re-introduced to schools, to develop student in all areas of life.

EdoBEST: Raising the standard of education

Edo State government discovered that education of the state can only move forward with teachers playing important roles therefore, the state invests in teachers and infrastructure development across all the basic schools in the state. This huge investment has started producing results in the following areas;

- i. Increase in students' enrolment across the state.
- ii. Having qualified teachers and adaptable teachers who are motivated to teach.
- iii. Having teachers who are equipped with 21st century pedagogical teaching methods and can utilise them to cater for students of all background.
- iv. Improving academic performance of the students.
 - v. Absenteeism by the teacher has stopped since individual teacher can be monitored through their tablets.
- vi. Giving room for curriculum coverage.
- vii. School infrastructure has greatly improved which motivate parents to enrol their children in government schools.
- viii. Improving teachers' skills in information and communication technology (ICT knowledge).
- ix. Rewarding of hardworking teachers.
- x. Providing opportunities for students to develop in the three domains of education.

Issues in EdoBEST

Has EdoBEST met the set goals? This is the question in the minds of citizens of Edo State. In order to find out the issues facing EdoBEST, the researcher interviewed critical stakeholders in the state and their positions are highlighted thus:

- i. The Edo State government believes that the programme has been a huge success. At every given opportunity the governor boasts of the huge leap in education in the state. This conviction has made the state government to increase the scope of the program from primary school to the upper basic level and is making plans to include the senior secondary school level.
- ii. However, other stakeholders such as the parents, the public, educationists and teachers have different view entirely. To the educationists, this programme has been described as a hoarse. They hold firm conviction that the curriculum of EdoBEST is shrouded in mystery and that the necessary steps of curriculum innovation were not followed. It was conceived and introduce without due regards to the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens of the state. The public is of the opinion that as parents, they have the fundamental right to know the content of the education their children and wards are exposed to in schools.
- iii. Many of the teachers who are at the frontline of EdoBEST have criticised the programme on the ground that the curriculum is different from the national curriculum of Nigeria and that this puts the recipients at a serious disadvantage in terms of performance in the national examinations.
- iv. Teachers have also complained that enough training in terms of basic ICT skills was not provided prior to the commencement of the program and so they have difficulties in operating at the level demanded by the program. It will be recalled that teachers were given short period of training before the commencement of the program. To many of the teachers that were interviewed in the course of this study, the training was grossly inadequate and more training was needed especially in handling the ICT gadgets.
- v. Teachers are in agreement that the programme has completely eroded their initiatives. The program has reduced them to robots in classroom. They are constrained by time because the timetable is controlled centrally. Equally they are limited to contents and strategies and that teacher's initiatives and flexibilities in terms of choice of methods are completely out in EdoBEST programme and that this was not resulting in the expected critical thinking envisaged by the state government.

Conclusion

For any nation to rise to the developmental level in every aspect either in economy, education, security, technology etc. education of such country must attain the required standard in terms of quality of teachers engaged in the teaching and learning process, the infrastructure available to the students and teachers to enhance teaching and learning process and the political will of the government to do the needful in supporting the growth and development of education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for better quality education in Edo State and other states in the country.

- i. Teachers, who are the ones implementing EdoBEST should have an unfettered access to the curriculum being implemented. Teachers who were sampled in the course of this work claimed ignorance of the curriculum.
- ii. The curriculum of EdoBEST should be put on public domain for stakeholders to have access to it. Stakeholders such as curriculum specialists serving and retired claimed ignorance of EdoBEST curriculum package.
- iii. EdoBEST programme should as a matter of necessity be assessed by an independent body. This is to find out the relevance of the programme to the national curriculum as well as to determine whether the programme is at par with the national base line. One of the ways this can be done is by exposing the graduands to national common entrance examinations conducted by National Examination Council (NECO).
- iv. The welfare of teachers is paramount to the quality delivery, better salary structure for teachers in the country will attract the best brain into the teaching profession
- v. Special allowance should be available for teachers in rural areas to encourage those teaching in the rural areas.
- vi. Government should prioritise teacher education by way of training and retraining of teachers through in service programmes.

References

- Alao, I. G., Ochepe, M. I. & Owolabi, M. M. (2019). Enhancing best practices in teacher education in Nigeria: A focus on teacher professionalism and ethics. *Confluence Journal of Education*, 10(1), 52-61.
- Ayodele, C. A. (2020). Using the universal basic education curriculum and classroom situation in achieving cultural beliefs, ethical principles and corruption free society. *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 27(4), 40-47.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National policy on education*. 6th edition, Abuja: NERDC.
- Irigoyen, C. (2017). Universal basic education in Nigeria. *Centre For Public Impact. ABCG foundation*, [centreforpublicimpact.org/case study](http://centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study).
- IDinsight (2023). EdoBEST program 2018 aims to leverage on technology
- IDinsight (2023). A new chapter for Edo State basic education
- Obaseki, G.O. (2023). A forward to Edo State learning agenda: Learning for skills. *A publication of Edo State Government*.
- National Council for Teacher Education (1998). *Competency-based and commitment-oriented teacher education for quality college of education*. New Delhi: USA.
- Oviawe, J. O, Cantrell, S., Chen, L., Buttweiler, M., Nash, S. & Nwokeyi, S. (2019). The EdoBEST effect. EdoBEST reporting digital view.
- Oviawe, J O, (2020) Forward to the EdoBEST 2.0 learning agenda-Draft