

# Financing Basic Education in Nigeria: Linking Resources to Learning Outcomes

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## Abstract

*Basic education represents the very first level of education a child is exposed to. It is compulsory and universal. The financing, though complex comes mainly from the Federal Government block grant of not less than 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Funds. Generally, the budget for education fall short of international recommendations. This affects provisions considerably, which invariably affects the learning outcomes of the children. Review of the current funding status is needed.*

**Keywords:** Basic education, financing, linking, outcomes and resources.

## Introduction

Education is the training given to members of a society to help them transform themselves and in the process become useful to themselves and their society. Fafunwa in Oralu and Oladele (2015) defined education as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where the education is based.

Education is a fundamental human right, which has a wide range of impact on both the individual and the society. In view of this, the Nigerian government has some specific goals which it intends education should achieve which are:

- Ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual;
- Ensure the quality of education delivery at all levels;
- Promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction;
- Ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society and the world of work
- Collaborate with development partners, the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations and local communities to support and fund education; and
- Promote information and communication technology capability at all levels.

NPE(2013),p 6-7.

The education system in Nigeria is divided into pre-primary, basic, post basic

and tertiary levels. Basic education is the education given to children aged 0 – 15 years. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) categorized it into early childhood education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early childhood education is mainly in the hands of private sector with only one year of it within the formal education sector.

Basic education is composed of 9 years of mandatory comprehensive school preceded by 1 year of optional pre-primary education. The first 6 years of basic education is referred to as primary education; the last 3 years of basic education is called junior secondary education. Basic education is provided free of charge.

The main institutional framework under which Basic education in Nigeria operates is the 2004 Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act enacted by the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Act provides for the Federal governments intervention for uniform and qualitative basic education. Further, it stipulates the right of the child to compulsory free universal basic education as well as the duty of the parent to ensure the education of his child.

The act also established a body to be known as the Universal Basic Education Commission which shall have a board with members to be constituted as stipulated in the Act with statutory functions. Universal Basic Education Commission is at the federal level, State Universal Basic Education Boards are responsible for basic education at the state level, while within the Local Government Area, Local Government Education Authority is responsible.

For the purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, a Universal Basic Education (UBE), was instituted by the government with the following objectives;

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotions;
- the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
- reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
- catering through all forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling; and
- ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills/as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning.

NPE(2013),p 17.

### **Financing of Basic Education**

Financing is the monetary resource that serves as a means of acquiring all required educational resources. Its availability, provision and utilization determines to a great extent the success or otherwise of any educational programme like the Universal Basic Education Programme whose objectives are:

- Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneur, wealth generation and educational advancement;
- develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;
- inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of

- independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour;
- inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religious, ethnic and socio-economic background; and
- provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

NPE (2013), p24-25

Education systems rely on financing to function. These finances are used to pay for the inputs required to implement education policies. Availability of finances does not guarantee a quality education and outcome but a quality education is impossible to achieve without adequate financial resources. The importance of finance in any enterprise cannot be overemphasized as Durosaro and Fasasi (2009) state that financing education is an important aspect of public finance.

Financing of basic education is complex as all three tiers of government are involved in providing funding for basic education. Basic education is financed through different sources at Federal, State and Local Government levels. The federal ministry of education has a basic education counterpart in the Universal Basic Education Commission, (UBEC), the state ministry of education's counterpart is the State Universal Basic Education Board, (SUBEB) and at the local government level a separate Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) is responsible. This, Freikman (2007) states produces overlapping responsibilities, leading to confusion, weakened accountability and duplication of efforts. The main goal however should be the effective and efficient use of resources provided.

The implementation of the Universal Basic Education is financed from federal government block grant of not less than 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund, funds or contributions in form of Federal guaranteed credits and local and international donor grants. There are conditions attached to the accessing of these funds. For any state to qualify for the Federal Government block grant pursuant to sub-section 1(1) of this section, such state shall contribute not less than 50% of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project. Unfortunately, most states do not comply so most times they cannot access funds for the basic education sector in their states.

The main source of revenue used by states for basic education comes from statutory transfer of the Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC). The allocation is based on an allocation formula for different states. The administration and disbursement of funds shall be through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), which shall be established by each state. The funds are provided directly to SUBEB, which is responsible for managing all non-salary spending (Steenbergen, Nnodu, Nwachukwu & Nyager 2016).

The Universal Basic Education Intervention Fund (UBE-F) is the main federal funding that is provided to states for basic education and it is used for development expenditure only. They are statutory allocations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, this is the most reliable source of funding for school improvement. States however provide limited counterpart matching funds which they are not under obligation to give. The UBE-F is disbursed as follows:

- 50% as Matching Grant Funds for provision of infrastructure such as classrooms, furniture, toilets, workshops, libraries, equipment etc;
- 14% as Educational Imbalance Fund for maintaining equity and inclusiveness and eliminating all forms of disparities and disadvantages;
- 15% as Instructional Material Fund for the provision of textbooks in the core subjects and reading materials;
- 10% as Teacher Professional Development Fund for the training of serving teachers and education managers on various aspects of school activities;
- 5% as Good Performance Fund to encourage states doing well in the implementation of UBE programme;
- 2% as Special Education Fund for those with special needs;
- 2% as UBE Monitoring Fund;
- 2% as UBE Implementation Fund.

Steenberger et al (2016) p.6

The administration and disbursement of funds shall be through the State Universal Education Board, which shall be established by each state. State governments can choose whether or not to provide matching grants, thus influencing albeit negatively, funds for basic education.

Below is a table showing Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education over a period of time as well as the percentage of the education budget allocated to UBEC.

**Table 1: Nigeria's Education Budget**

Year		Education (#)	% of Total Budget	UBEC Allocation (#)	% of Education Budget
2004		93.7bn	5.24%		
2005		147.8bn	8.21%		
2006		195.6bn	10.43%		
2007		221bn	9.75%		
2008		250bn	10.04%		
2009		252.2bn	8.79%		
2010		339.6bn	7.37%		
2011		393.8bn	9.32%		
2012		468.3bn	9.86%		
2013		426.5bn	10.21%		
2014		493bn	10.63%		
2015		492bn	10.75%		
2016		483bn	7.92%	77.1bn	15.9%
2017		455bn	7.41%	95bn	20.9%
2018		496bn	7.04%	109.06bn	21.9%
2019		512bn	7.1%	113.9bn	22.2%
2020		541bn	6.9%	112bn	20.7%

### Compiled by the author from Eduplana

Observation from Table 1 reveals the amount located to education throughout the period 2004-2020. This falls short of the recommendation of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in Addis Ababa in 2015. The conference recommended at least 4-6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and at least 15-20 percent of total public expenditure to the education sector. The adequacy of monetary input is not encouraging.

This inadequacy Okeke (2019) in a newspaper report states that the World Bank says Nigeria has one of the lowest education spending in the world, devoting only a paltry \$200 to each student per year.

**Table2: Budgetary Allocation to Education from 2005-2013**

Year	Recurrent #	Capital #	UBEC #
2005	92.59bn	27.44bn	27.8bn
2006	129.42bn	35.79bn	30.48bn
2007	137.48bn	48.29bn	35.3bn
2008	162.69bn	47.75bn	39.7bn
2009	183.01bn	33.62bn	35.56bn
2010	198.08bn	97.21bn	44.34bn
2011	304.39bn	35.09bn	54.33bn
2012	345.09bn	55.06bn	68.24bn
2013	360.82bn	71.94bn	76.28bn

Source: Eduplana

Table 2 gives a clearer picture of education budget where majority of what is budgeted goes to recurrent expenditure. The little left for capital expenditure usually barely enough to maintain the much needed facilities to make learning worthwhile.

### Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes refer to essential observable and measurable knowledge, skills and attitudes, acquired from schooling. Learning outcomes are intended gains from a learning process, that is, what a child has been able to achieve after exposure to a course of learning activity. It is in different categories: knowledge, understanding, skill, values, personal development and progression to employment.

Spady (1994) in Lesch (n.d.) who spearheaded the development of outcomes based education, suggests that the ability to demonstrate learning is a key point in measuring learning outcome. This demonstration of learning involves a performance of some kind in order to show significant learning, or learning that matters.

Quality education is the emphasis of Education for All (EFA) not only in enrollment but also in retention and achievement. Although gains in access to education has occurred, improvement in quality still remains questionable and of concern.

## **Financing and Provision of Resources**

The budgetary allocation of finances does not always translate to the provision of needed resources for the execution of the UBE programme. This is evidenced by several researches revealing the inadequacies in facilities. Oguniran (2018) suggests there are strong indications that school facilities needed for effective execution of UBE are inadequate, and in some places they are totally absent.

Steenbergen, et.al (2016) in the same vein revealed that instructional materials were in short supply in schools. Going further, they also revealed the school environments post stress to students because of erosion and cracked walls. In a similar study, Chukwu, Eze and Agada (2016) in a study noted that instructional materials at the basic educational were provided to a very little extent. Also of equal importance is the condition of the various school facilities.

Another major challenge is the utilization of funds as most states access the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) grant end up not utilizing the fund appropriately.

Coordination of the UBE programme is also a major challenge. As noted by Abdullahi, Madya and Abdullah because the delivery of basic education in Nigerian lacks coordination, it creates problems of poor infrastructure, dilapidated buildings and increase in dropout.

## **Financing of Basic Education and Learning Outcomes**

Educational leaders have long sought how to allocate resources to effectively influence outcome. The casual relationship between the provision of educational resources and educational outcomes continues to attract attention and rightly so too. The relationship between resources and education outcome is not however clear as Anyanwu and Erhijakpor (2007) posit that some countries which allocate lower than regional average proportions of gross domestic product (GDP) to primary and secondary education achieve good outcomes; in other countries, higher than average spending results in poorer outcomes. Unfortunately, there is no general consensus regarding effectiveness of education financing and students outcomes.

Anero, (2017) in a study established a strong relationship between funding/teacher recruitment policies and quality of primary education in Nigeria. Studies by Nwafor, Uchendu and Akanni (2015) conclude that proper funding plays a significant role in achievement of educational objectives. Whatever the argument proper financing will help provide facilities that enhance learning as well as the learning environment.

Nwoko in Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko cites that between 2010 and 2014, the expenditure on education accounted for 0.5 percent of the national GDP and 8.8 percent of the federal government spending. This clearly falls short of 4-6 percent share of GDP or 26percent of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO and does not meet the Education For All (EFA) recommendation of 20 percent of national budget. Even with this, the learning levels of children are not up to the desirable level expected.

Educational outcomes remain weak on various indicators of quality and equity. (Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko & Adeniran n.d.) According to them, quality of

education in Nigeria was ranked 124<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries on the Global Competitive Index in 2015. The FRN (2013) stated categorically that the traditional Nigerian values of integrity, mutual respect, dignity of labour, hard work and professionalism have been eroded. This shows that the objectives of the UBE programme are not being realized.

Giving credence to this, Fleet in Onyekwena et.al found that 58.3 percent of primary school children in Nigeria are not meeting the expected levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Money is needed to build classrooms, employ and retrain teachers, pay teachers and run the schools on a daily basis. It was stated categorically that 65.7 percent of the students cannot read, while 51 percent lack basic arithmetic skill.

This tallies with Universal Basic Education (2013), where it states in its report that performance on cognitive objective tests was not very encouraging except in English Language. The same woeful performance was noticed in essay tests.

UBEC (2017) has a different result. It revealed that in English studies, learners were good in multiple choice test, where as they were fair in the essay test. Furthermore, achievement on content and cognitive domains showed that scores were higher in reading (59.59) than in grammar (53.66). Learners also performed higher in comprehension (63.43) than in knowledge (56.65) and higher order (53.41). In mathematics, learners were good in the multiple choice test, but were only fair in the essay test.

## Conclusion

Basic education is the right of every child according to the United Nation's General Assembly 1948 Declaration on Human Rights. It is also a right according to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nigeria being a signatory to these international treaties had no choice but to domesticate these to care for her citizens. This gave birth to the Universal Basic Education, which was backed up by an Act of parliament in 2004.

The basic education programme is compulsory for all children aged 0-15 years as government views it as a means of achieving a self-sufficient nation especially in this knowledge driven era. The programme is financed mainly by the federal government, though the state, local governments and other non governmental organizations are also involved. The financing of basic education has not been easy, but funds provided seem not to be utilized judiciously to provide the needed resources (human and material) crucial for providing students opportunities to learn.

The inadequacy in the provision influences what happens in the classroom, this may lower learning outcomes. Learning outcomes of basic education is not very encouraging. For a long term, sustained learning outcome, a blueprint for proper implementation of the UBE policy is necessary.



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