



Teachers' Challenges and Job Performance under the Universal Basic Education Scheme in Rivers State, Nigeria (2007-2015)

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Abstract: The central focus of this paper is to identify the challenges teachers face in the course of discharging their basic responsibilities, and the impact of the challenges on the teachers' job performance in Rivers State under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The scope of the study is on the job activities and challenges of the teachers, the Rivers State Government's role in the implementation process of the UBE objectives in the state, and the attendant consequences of the teachers' job challenges on both the students and the state, within the period of 2007 and 2015. Expectancy-value is used as the theoretical framework of analysis to explain teachers' job performance in the schools, secondary data are employed for the study and content analysis engaged as a tool to analyze the data. The study findings prove among other things, that poor motivation, manpower imbalance, political influence on teachers' appointment and inadequate workshop and teaching facilities are teachers' challenges while discharging their duties in the schools. The study further established that the teachers' challenges have significant impact on the teachers' job performance in the state UBE. Arising from the findings, some recommendations were made as strategies to reduce teachers' challenges and improve on their job performance in the state UBE.

Keywords : Challenges, Job Performance, Expectancy-value

Introduction

Education is a veritable tool for the development of both the individuals and the state. It involves the transmission of worthwhile value such as skills, knowledge and planned activities that can develop learners' potential for national development (Ochoyi and Danladi, 2008). It is the basic tool for achieving development at all levels. In their views,

Etuk, Ering and Ajake (2012:178) opine that education is the process of acquiring new values and skills for the purpose of effective functioning in the society. Adeyanju (2010) in Anaduaka and Okafor (2013:152) corroborate the above, and added that no development can take place in human society without education, and no peace and security can take place without development. This proves that development of both the individuals and

state is dependent to a large extent on the quality and accessibility of individuals to education. Education becomes the index for measuring the development capacity of both the individuals and state (Daura and Audu, 2015:72). It becomes an important social commodity that is desired by all, but relatively not affordable by all, either on account of scarce resources or ill-equipped teaching personnel. At whatever point, the teaching personnel play the most prominent role in the actualization of effective education and development of the individuals and state. Although some scholars view education as a right to all, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 states that everyone has the right to education, and that education should be made available to all. (Unagha, 2008). Furthermore, the World Conference on Education held on 5th-9th March, 1990 at Jomitten, Thailand declared “Education For All” and made it known that states should ensure that their citizens are given the necessary education. In Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education was used as an educational programme to actualize the policy of education for all. The right to education for all Nigerians of educable age was pursued by the Obasanjo administration, as Obasanjo (2006:2) states that educating a child is closing the prison gates. His vision for achieving education for all, prompted his administration’s quest for the establishment of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria (UBE). The UBE is aimed at creating enabling environment for achieving basic education for all Nigerians.

Good as the aim of the UBE may appear, it can only be achieved when there is a teacher, who will carry out the

implementation process on imparting the required skill and knowledge on people. The teacher becomes an important tool and necessary instrument to achieve the state programme (UBE) on education for all. A teacher is the one who teaches the learner or one who helps the learner to learn. The teacher is the one that instructs others during the learning process. In his view, Amaele (2010:37) sees the teacher as one whose job performance is influenced by his/her calibre or potential, which determines the success or failure of the educational system. However, the teachers could be faced with challenges while carrying out their duties as teachers and such challenges can also affect their job performance. This encouraged Inayatullah and Jehangir (2012:78) to state that teachers’ motivation influences teachers’ job performance, which also affects the achievement of the educational policy of the state. However, in Nigeria, teachers are faced with one form of challenge or the other in the course of discharging their duties at school, which also affects their job performance. This implies that the level of job performance by the teachers determines the rate of the success or otherwise of the educational programme including UBE in Nigeria.

This paper therefore, attempts to identify the challenges facing teachers in Rivers State under the UBE scheme and discuss the effects of the teachers’ challenges on teachers’ job performance in Rivers State under the UBE scheme. Towards this end, the paper principally generated its data from the secondary sources, which include official government reports on UBE, UBE bulletins, journals and issues raised in scholarly literature review.

The Universal Basic Education Scheme

The idea of free and universal education in Nigeria was first introduced in Western Nigeria in 1955 by the Premier of the old Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The emergence of universal education policy in the Western Region engineered the introduction and practice of free and compulsory education for pupils of primary schools in the region, and was popularly called Universal Primary Education (Lab-Popoola, Bello and Atanda, 2009: 637). The Universal Primary Education (UPE) was replicated in old Eastern Region and Lagos Colony in 1957. The Federal Military Government of Nigeria under the headship of General Obasanjo in 1976 formally introduced the Universal Primary Education policy as a national policy on education, thereby making it compulsory and free for all Nigerian Act. The Act provided for various organs, structures and strategies at various levels for the implementation of the UBE programme. At the Federal level was Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) at the state level, and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in the third tier. The Act provided criteria for states, including Rivers to meet before accessing the UBE funds. In Rivers State, UBE law was domesticated in 2005 (UBE Act, 2005) with the view of providing free and compulsory education for Rivers State people, managing the employed staff, including teachers, etc.

The UBE's vision as outlined in the Act is to be a world class education intervention and regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in Nigeria and its scope

children to attend primary schools at no cost. Globally, the World Conference held in Jomitten, Thailand in 1990 clearly declared that education should be the property right of all and be given to all – Education For All. In furtherance of the above, President Obasanjo launched the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria on 30th September, 1999 in Sokoto. The UBE is to provide free, compulsory and universal basic education to all Nigerian children from primary to junior secondary, covering a period of nine (9) years. Anaduaka and Okafor (2013:152) add that the UBE is more comprehensive and elaborate than UPE in terms of their guidelines and operational scope. Although the UBE had a setback in terms of implementation, due to the absence of enabling laws to back up its operations, until 26th March, 2004, when the National Assembly passed the UBE include provision of programmes and initiatives for early childhood care and education, six-year primary education and three (3) years of Junior Secondary Education (UBE Act, 2004).

Conceptual Clarification Teacher Job Performance

Many scholars have different views on who a teacher is and their job performance in the society. A teacher plays prominent role in the educational process of the state, as the teacher serves as the prime mover in the achievement of the educational policy of the state. The teacher is one that teaches the learner what the learner did not have adequate or previous knowledge on. Maclean and Mohr (1999) see the teacher as subjective insider involved in classroom instruction as he goes about his routine of instructing students, grading papers, taking attendance, evaluating their performance

as well as looking at their curriculum. In the view of the above scholars, teachers are more than classroom instructors; they are the ones who raise questions and proffer answers to the questions where the students are unable in the process of teaching the students. According to Soni (1999) a “teacher is a leader, who is always dynamic and believes in change and have the capacity to prepare future leaders and develop in them the skills that they may need to succeed in the future”

The above sees the teacher as a visionary person that prepares and empowers the student for future development. Ogidi (1991:32) and Agina-Buo (2005:43) identify some basic qualities of the teacher such as good knowledge of the subject matter, ability to understand the student differences, ability to develop student competence, resourcefulness, good leadership capacity, self-discipline, and these qualities have significant impact on the teachers’ job performance. Indeed, the quality and quantity of available teachers affect the job performance of the teachers and the objectives of the UBE. This probably warranted Amaele (2010:37) to see teachers as prominent actors that interpret and transmit the desirable knowledge, skill, attitudes and values in the society. The implication is that the capacity of the teachers’ knowledge and skill affect the teachers’ job performance.

Campell (1990), Kanfer (1990) and Reo (1999) note that in discussing job performance, there is need to conceptualize performance from two basic perspectives namely, behavioural performance, which entails the actions of the staff towards a goal; and outcome performance, which entails the result of

the action of the staff. However, it is difficult to separate action performance from outcome performance in the course of discussing job performance, as there is a correlation between them. To Borman and Motowidlo (1993), performance is a multidimensional term, which has to do with task performance, namely, individual proficiency, which involves individual activities that contribute to the organizational value. Task performance could be direct when it involves such class of staff as the production workers or indirect when it involves managerial staff;; while conceptual performance has to do with the supporting activities carried out in the process of achieving the organizational goal. Indeed, job performance entails those activities carried out by the staff for the purpose of achieving the organizational goals.

In another development, Dornyei (2001) sees motivation as a propelling force that drives the employees’ job performance, including the teachers in the industry. Such motivation could be intrinsic, when it is self-generated factors; and extrinsic, when it is induced by external or environmental factors. Such motivational force includes, but not limited to job specification, job supervision and assessment, reward and compensation, promotion, disciplinary action, autonomy, scope of job, and job orientation (Christen, Iyei and Soberman, 2006:137; Armstrong, 2007). The above clarifies the fact that teachers’ job performance is determined by the rate of job motivation the teacher receives. On the contrary, Adelabu (2005) states that motivation is not the sole determinant of teachers’ job performance; rather the nature of the challenges that the teachers face in the society is what determines their rate of

job performance. Such challenges include low wages and incentives, poor work environment, irregular promotions and salaries, excessive workload, low societal status, discrimination in staff posting, etc. This study tends to adopt the views of Adelabu (2005) on teachers' job performance, as the perceived teachers' challenges affect their job performance psychology and job performance, and in return affect the objectives of UBE in Rivers State.

Theoretical Framework

Expectancy-value Theory

Expectancy-value theory was developed by John William Atkinson in the 1950s and 1960s, but popularized by Martin Fishbein in the 1970s and Jacquelynne Eccles in the 1980s. According to Eccles (1983) "expectancy-value theory focuses on two factors, namely expectancy for success, and subjective task value." Expectancy implies the confidence of an individual or ability of the individual to achieve a given task, while task value implies the rate of importance the individual attaches to the task. According to Green (2002:990) "expectancy-value theory asserts that the amount of effort that people are willing to expend on a task is the product of (a) the degree to which they expect to succeed at the task, and (b) the degree to which they value the task and success on the task". This implies that expectancy-value theory expresses behaviour as a function of the expectancies one has and the value of the goal toward which one is working. The theory proves that workers are goal oriented in their activities, as the workers activities are performed or carried out in response to their anticipated benefits. The theory explains more of the gratification or reward workers anticipate in the course

of their job performance in the organization. This shows that the theory sees motivation as the force behind the job performance of the workers in the organization. Fishbein (1967) notes that in expectancy-value theory, people orient themselves towards the world according to their expectations (beliefs) and evaluations. Similarly, Palmgreen (1984) sees the expectancy-value theory as the perceived probability that a particular action or behaviour will produce a particular consequence, and evaluation as the degree of the effect or outcome of the said action or behaviour will produce, which also affects the organizational activities and productivity. Indeed, expectancy-value theory explains that there are expectations and values or beliefs among workers, which influence their behaviour or performance in the workplace, including UBE.

This theory is relevant to the study based on its usefulness in the analysis of the attitude of the UBE teachers and their job performance in Rivers State. The reward or value expectations of the teachers affect to a large extent the teachers' job performance. Obviously, the teacher, like any other public servant in Nigeria, is influenced by the rate of motivation or otherwise they receive from the government. Their expectation and value becomes part of their challenges in the industry and it affects their job performance and productivity in the teaching industry in Nigeria.

Teachers' Challenges and its Impact on Job Performance under the UBE Scheme in Rivers State

Poor Motivation : Anaduaka and Okafor (2013:155) note that poor motivation is a major teachers' challenge in the teaching

industry, and state that poor motivation affects the teachers' job performance in the classroom and their general productivity in the industry. There is no doubt that the teachers, including those in UBE in Rivers State are poorly motivated in terms of moral support, societal recognition and value, and payment of certain allowances. This poor motivation affects the teachers' morale for hard work and their relationship with the students, which in totality leads to the teachers' low productivity.

Manpower Imbalance: Another notable problem is manpower imbalance in UBE, Rivers State as a challenge facing the teachers. UBE is a programme that involves nine (9) basic years of study for pupil/student, covering the primary school (1-6 years) and junior secondary school (6-9 years). Arising from the quest for urban migration, most teachers lobby to be posted to the urban areas in Rivers State as their area of primary assignment. Such urban areas include Ahoada town, Port Harcourt city, Obio Akpor Local Government Area, Bori town, Eleme, Omoku etc., thereby leaving the UBE schools in the rural areas (villages) with inadequate teachers, while over-staffing the schools in the urban areas. The implication of the manpower imbalance is that the few teachers in the rural areas/villages are burdened with excessive work-load, while the numerous teachers in the schools in the urban areas are under-utilized. This affects the teachers' job performance at both the rural and urban UBE schools in the state.

Inadequate Workshops and Teaching Facilities: UBE is basically for technical and vocational education for the students at their early age. Unfortunately, the

workshops for technical and vocational courses are not there in the schools. Even the newly built schools by the past Rotimi Amaechi administration across the state have the workshops either not completed or equipped. Nwabochi (2013) sees poorly equipped and shortage of workshop as a challenge to the technical teachers, who may not have adequate opportunity to discharge their duties, thereby having low job productivity.

Political Influence on Appointment of Teachers: Since 2008, there has been massive recruitment of teachers for the Rivers State UBE. Good as the idea may sound, with the intention that the newly recruited teachers will improve the service delivery objectives of the UBE, but the influence of the state political actors in the recruitment process, such as demand for quota and representation of all the local governments, personal candidates, ethnicity, etc., have affected the calibre of teachers being recruited, which affects the teachers' job performance in the schools.

Poor Classroom Accommodation: The Rotimi Amaechi administration identified poor classroom accommodation as a challenge to the achievement of UBE objectives in Rivers State, and resolved to build good classrooms in all communities in the state. Unfortunately, the vision of the projects has not been actualized, as less than ten percent (10%) of all the newly constructed classrooms are either completed or put into use in the state, while the old classrooms are also demolished to provide space for the new ones. The implication is that UBE is left with no functional classroom for both the teachers and pupil/student to operate in most communities. Some communities

have also turned their town halls to UBE classrooms without facilities. This results in difficult challenge for the teachers in the discharge of their job functions in the state.

Misplacement and Under-utilization of Personnel: Arising from high unemployment rate in Rivers State, and the state government quest to reduce the unemployment using the recent UBE recruitment exercise as a medium, the recruitment brought in many graduates who are not actually teachers by training, thereby recruiting teachers without teaching knowledge and skill into UBE schools for teaching job. This was viewed as a compensation policy of the state to the numerous unemployed graduates, and not teachers recruitment policy, and has brought the wrong calibre of personnel to the teaching profession, thereby resulting in low productivity from the non-professional teachers in the UBE.

Irregular Teacher Training: There is a wide gap in the training activities of the UBE teachers in the state, as a result of irregular training and retraining scheme for the teachers, particularly on contemporary research and teaching techniques in the academic industry on I.C.T issues. The irregular training affects the teachers teaching techniques and job performance in the classrooms.

Recommendations

Upon the study findings, the following are recommended as means to reducing the teachers' challenges in their workplace and improve on their job performance in the service:

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- Regular training and retraining of UBE teachers, to enable them adapt to the contemporary teaching dynamics and improve on their service delivery.
- Teaching job should be treated as professional job with basic qualifications, and should be offered to only trained teachers. This will give opportunity for the trained teachers to be recruited into the service, and deliver their services accordingly.
- Appointment of teachers should be on merit, and posting on manpower need to ensure adequate available manpower utilization in the service.
- The state government, corporate organizations and philanthropists should consider the provision of classrooms and learning facilities as vital and improve in the provision of the needed facilities to ensure the achievement of UBE objectives and teacher performance.
- The state government should improve on the teachers' motivation in the state, as to encourage them in the discharge of their duties.

In conclusion, it is believed that when the above strategies are applied in the management of UBE programme and teachers alike, the teachers' challenges will be reduced, and this will enhance the teachers' job performance in the state.

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