



Application of Petrol Subsidy Funds to Address the Problems of Universal Basic Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper discussed application of subsidy funds to address the major problems facing universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria. Secondary data were employed in the paper. The data were collected from published, unpublished papers, national dailies, articles and reference materials. The paper concluded that subsidy funds can be used to address the problems of under-funding, shortage of professional teachers, infrastructural facilities deficit, shortage of learning materials, improve capacity development programme and teachers' motivation. The paper recommended that the government should set up of committee to handle the disbursement of the funds in the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Basic Schools, Funds, Government, Subsidy, Payment.*

Introduction

Subsidy payment was introduced into the Nigerian economy in the early 1970's since then subsidy payment has been taking huge sum of funds from the government revenue. According to the Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Nigeria has spent N13.7 trillion (\$74.386 billion) on petrol subsidy payments from 2005 to 2020. The data collected by the agency revealed that subsidy payments in 2005 were N351 billion (\$2.66 billion), N219.72 billion (\$1.70 billion) in 2006, N236.64 billion (\$1.89 billion) in 2007, N360.18 billion (\$3.03 billion) in 2008, N198.11 billion (\$1.60 billion) in 2009 and N416.45 billion (\$2.76 billion) in 2010 (Thecable 2022).

In 2011, the payment was N1.9 trillion (\$12.18 billion), N690 billion (\$4.34 billion) in 2012, N495 billion (3.11 billion) in 2013, N482 billion (\$2.92 billion) in 2014, N316.70 billion (\$1.62 billion) in 2015, N99 billion (\$0.39 billion) in 2016, N141.63 billion (\$0.44 million) in 2017, N722.30 billion (\$2.36 billion) in 2018, N578.07 billion (\$1.88 billion) in 2019 and 134 billion (\$0.37 billion) in 2020 (Thecable 2022).

Subsidy payment is draining the country's revenue that are supposed to be used for infrastructural facilities development, education, health, agriculture and other social programmes. According to Ogbonnaya Orji, executive secretary, NEITI subsidy payment would continue to suffocate Nigerian economy and would not allow this economy to breathe because it is a payment that must be made, and then we do not also think that those expected to benefit are the beneficiaries," (Thecable, 2022). The World Bank as quoted by Punch (2022a) submitted that the cost of fuel subsidy in Nigeria exceeded the government's spending on health, education and social protection for Nigerians.



The subsidy payment yearly continues to increase while other sector like the health, education, agriculture, capital projects continues to experiences declined in resources allocation to develop these sectors. The poor revenue generation and the large amount of funds consumed by subsidy payment have made many Nigerians to call for stoppage of subsidy payment and re-directing the funds to other critical sectors that would stimulate social, economic and technological development. For instance, the Director General of the Budget Office of Nigeria, Ben Akabueze, submitted that the trillions of naira spent on fuel subsidy can be deployed to other creative sectors, particularly education (Punch, 2022d). Also, Ibru the former president of Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry advised the Federal Government to divert the fund into subsidizing education and health care in the country to create more enduring impact in the lives of the citizens (Primebusiness 2022). Based on this submissions, this paper is aimed to discuss application of Petrol subsidy funds to address major challenges facing the universal Basic Education in Nigeria for a sustainable development.

Punch, (2022c) quoted Gillis-Harry who suggested to the federal government that the subsidy that is being paid on petrol should be stopped. The money should be recycled into other developmental projects such as health, refineries, etc, Based on this, this paper discuss application of subsidy funds to address the major problems facing universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

Concept of Universal Basic Education

Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. For purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE), with the following objectives:

- a. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- b. the provision of compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
- c. reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
- d. catering through appropriate 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
- e. ensuring the acquisition of the 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.

Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises:

- 1-year of Pre-Primary
- 6 years of Primary
- 3 years of Junior Secondary Education.



The goals of Basic Education are to:

- a. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement;
- b. develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;
- c. inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour;
- d. inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socioeconomic background; and
- e. 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 capability (FRN, 2013).

Basic education programme in Nigeria is faced with many challenges. According to Ogunode (2020a) the challenges include under-funding, shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor capacity development programme, poor teacher motivation, shortage of learning materials and poor implementation of policies.

The above mentioned problems can be attributed to the poor funding of the programme since inception. Education funding in Nigeria is poor and below the UNESCO recommendation of 26%.

Application of Subsidy Funds in Administration of Universal Basic Education Programme

Petrol Subsidy funds can be applied to funding of UBE programme, employment of teachers, infrastructural facilities development, provision learning materials, improve capacity development programme and teachers' motivation.

Funding

Inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. A major challenge facing the primary school education and implementation of the curriculum at this level is funding in the midst of rising demands and cost of education (Alabi,& Ijaiya,2014; Amali, Bello & Okafor 2012). Ogunode (2020) observed that finance is one of the problem confronting the education sector owing to a drastic reduction in both the actual and proportion of government fund allocated to the education sector, despite the UNESCO's recommendations of allocation of 26% of a nation's national income to the sector. Contrary to this recommendation, Nigeria in the past ten years allotted less than the recommendation. Study by Blueprint (2021) indicated that in 2011, education got N393.8 billion or 9.3 per cent of the total budget; N468.3 billion or 9.86 per cent in 2012; N499.7 billion or 10.1 per cent in 2013; N494.7 billion or 10.5 per cent in 2014; N484.2 billion or 10.7 per cent in 2015; N369.6 billion or 7.9 per cent of the total budget in 2016; N550. 5 billion in 2017 representing 7.4 per cent of the total budget; N605.8 billion in 2018 or 7.04 per cent; N620.5 billion or 7.05 per cent in 2019 and N671.07 billion or 6.7 per cent in 2020 and N742.5 billion or 5.68 per cent of the total budget in 2021 (Blueprint 2021). 2022 got the sum of 7% of the total budget. Lack of political will, corruption, poor implementation of UNESCO recommendation, insecurity, fall in national revenue and subsidy payment have been identified as factor responsible for poor funding of education in Nigeria (Ogunode, & Madu 2021; Ogunode, Richard, & Musa (2021). The problem of poor funding of Universal Basic Education can be solved by deploying some part of subsidy money into the programme. This position is affirmed to by Jude (2022) when he advised the federal government of Nigeria to use the subsidy fund to fix the various problems facing the educational sector and health sector. This position is supported by Ibru as reports by Vanguard (2022a) who



advised the Federal Government to divert the subsidy fund into subsidizing education and health care in the country to create more enduring impact in the lives of the citizens. Ibru pointed out that so much is being spent on petroleum subsidy from the government's slim resources, hence the need to remove it and put such funds into education and health which according to him, would make every Nigerian to be better positioned to compete well in the global market place of opportunities (Primebusiness 2022).

Employment of Teachers

Shortage of professional teachers is also a problem facing the administration of universal basic education in Nigeria (Kubiat (2018); Ogunode, Jegede, Ajape 2021). Many Basic school in Nigeria do not have adequate professional teachers (Josiah, & Ogunode, 2021). International Organization for Migration (2014) submitted that a number of challenges have been identified as clogs in the realization of good access, equity and quality of education in Nigeria. One of these is the critical issue of teacher shortage at all levels of education. For instance, at the basic education level, A report by independent Newspapers (2019) reports that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary School across the nation. We have identified a number of challenges have been identified as clogs in the realization of good access, equity and quality of education in Nigeria. One of these is the critical issue of teacher shortage at all levels of education. There is a shortage of early child education teachers needed to attain the proposed 1:20 teacher-to-pupil ratio. Ogunode & Paul (2021) linked the problem of shortage of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions to poor funding of education. The problem of shortage of professional teachers in the Universal Basic Education Schools in Nigeria can be addressed by using part of the subsidy funds in the administration Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria. The funds can be used to employ more teachers in all the UBE school in Nigeria.

Infrastructural Facilities

Another problem facing the administration of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria is the challenge of inadequate infrastructural facilities. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. According to Ogunode (2020c) and Ogunode & Agwor (2021) school facilities include the school buildings, classrooms, accommodation, libraries, laboratories, furniture, recreational equipment, apparatus and other instructional materials, their availability, adequacy and relevance to academic achievement. Ogunode and Abashi (2020); Ogunode, and Stephen (2021) submitted that many Universal Basic Education Schools are not having adequate infrastructural facilities. Inadequate funding of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria have been identified among the factors responsible for poor development of infrastructural facilities in universal Basic schools across the country (Ogunode, Ohibime, Nasir, & Gregory, 2021; Ogunode & Nasir, 2021).The problem of inadequate infrastructure facilities can be fixed by using some part of subsidy funds in the universal basic education programme in Nigeria. This position is also maintained by Deji (2021) who suggested to the federal government of Nigeria to apply the subsidy funds to address problem of infrastructural deficits in the country which include the educational sector. This position is supported by Onadeko, (2021) that advised the government to borrow a leaf from other countries that have had policies on making the Oil sector better, Onadeko, (2021) also advised that there is a need to invest in education, infrastructure and creating employment, that way, people can be empowered to economically make decisions and fend for themselves, instead of paying subsidy that only a few enjoy and also giving grants that reach a few persons or more places than the other. Thisday (2022) quoted Marco Hernandez, World Bank Lead Economist for Nigeria suggested redirecting fiscal resources to investments in infrastructure, education, and health services; increasing "pro-health taxes", and improving tax compliance. Punch (2022g) quoted Professor of Energy Economics at Nnamdi Azikiwe



University, Uche Nwogwugwu, stressed the need to invest the subsidy funds in capital projects rather than on consumption in order to take many Nigerians off the poverty class.

Learning Materials

Learning materials are educational resources that aid learning programme of learners. Learning materials helps students to be learning properly. World Bank (2017) reported that there are inadequate instructional materials in the 2013 SDI Survey that tracks the availability of minimum teaching and learning materials and equipment in schools (pens, pencils, notebooks, textbooks, black boards, chalk, and so forth) and minimum infrastructure, including clean, private, and accessible toilets. In terms of teaching equipment, only 55 percent of schools surveyed in the four States had the required minimum. In terms of availability of textbooks, only 38 percent of pupils had a mathematics and English textbook. The challenges of shortage of learning materials in the UBE schools can be attributed to the problem of under-funding of UBE programme. This problem of shortage of learning materials can be addressed by using some part of subsidy funds to provide the various learning materials to the students in the all the universal basic schools across the country. Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa argued in support of this position when he advised the Federal Government to redirect fuel subsidy funds to healthcare and education services to lift poor Nigerians out of hardship. Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa stressed that continued subsidy on petroleum products was tantamount to supporting the rich at the expense of the poor (Guardian, 2021a).

Capacity Programme

Capacity is the ability to understand or do something and building is an increase in the amount of something over a period of time. Building capacity of teacher in education process therefore, is the conscious attempt at upgrading, renovating, and acquiring skills, abilities and strategies that must increase consistently over time and enable teachers react appropriately to academic dynamics including professional training, lesson delivery, effective use of instructional materials, teachers communication skills, provision of effective role model, effective discipline and students' control, improved conditions of service and most importantly, quality of classroom assessment to determine the needs of his/her learners in the learning process (Gimba, 2010). Needfoundation (2021) observed that Building the capacity of teachers is essential to achieving the quality of education and academic experience of our beneficiaries. The key is to provide children with the tools to think for themselves. To do so, we instil a sense of commitment in teachers and ensure that they have the skills to bring the best out of children while understanding the varied learning methods required to meet the needs of every child. Through extensive regular capacity building, teachers receive training on student-centred teaching methodology, social and emotional learning as well as training that enable them to make effective use of equipment, teaching aids and technology to ensure that each child gains as much as they can from the learning centre. In addition, teachers undergo subject-specific refresher courses and receive training on subjects that are part of the national curriculum. As important as capacity building programme is for teachers' development, it is unfortunate that the capacity building programme at the level of universal basic education programme is faced with many problems (Ogunode, Adah, Audu, & Pajo, 2021). Mcbrown, and Ogunode, (2022) concluded that inadequate funding is a major problem hindering the development of capacity building programme in the Nigerian educational institutions. Subsidy funds can be very useful in this area. Part of the funds can be used to provide training for the teachers in the UBE programme across the country. Thisday (2022) quoted Marco Hernandez, Onyekwena, Adedeji, Akanonu, Momoh, (2017) and Onyishi, Okechukwu, & Eme,(2012) agreed that the redirecting fiscal resources to investments in infrastructure, education, and health services would impact more on Nigerians.



Teachers Motivation

Another problem preventing effective administration of basic school in Nigeria is problem of poor motivation. Teachers teaching in the Nigerian basics schools are poorly motivated. Motivation is defined as a driving force that compels an individual to take some actions in order to achieve certain goals. Motivational level of everyone is different like perception, attitude of everyone is different. For example a person feels hungry, and as a response that particular person eats so the feelings of hunger get diminished. Adelabu (2005) discovered in Nigeria that teacher's motivation is very poor and teachers are also dissatisfied with their working environment and salary conditions. The reason behind the poor motivation of teachers is that they are having low salaries as compared to other professionals, poor work environment, no decision making authority, and also not giving them opportunity to develop their career. Motivation plays an important role in the organization because it increases the productivity of employees and the goals can be achieved in an efficient way. The behavior of employees can be change through motivation in any organization. Teachers are expected to play pivotal role in the implementation of the UBE programme, yet sufficient attention is not being paid to their motivation to the utter neglect of policy essence. Ajayi (2007) and Omokhodion (2008) concluded that teachers in Nigeria are poorly motivated. In fact, teachers had in recent times embarked on chain of industrial actions before government accepted 27.5% pay raise for professional teachers across the states. Even now, this pay rise is yet to be fully implemented in some states. Some part of the subsidy money can be used to solve the problem of poor motivation of teachers in the UBE programme in Nigeria. The money can be used to increase their salaries and welfare benefits. This position is supported by Director-general of the Budget Office, Ben Akabueze who advised that the trillions of dollars spent on fuel subsidies in Nigeria could be used to increase the pay of public servants, thereby meeting the demands of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members for higher wages and other teachers across the educational institutions in the country. He also submitted that public servants should be paid more than that, citing the ongoing issue of lecturers' wages and the ASUU strike, but he noted that inadequate public sector revenues limit the government's ability to pay more. (Businessday,2022). Okogu, (1993) and Onyeizugbe, & Onwuka, (2012) concluded that subsidy funds can be invest in critical sector of the economy like the health and education.

Conclusion Recommendations

This paper examined deployment of subsidy funds to address the challenges hindering the development of universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria. The paper concluded that subsidy funds can be used to address the problems of under-funding, shortage of professional teachers, infrastructural facilities deficit, shortage of learning materials, improve capacity development programme and teachers' motivation.

The paper recommended the following:

1. Government should set up of committee from the stakeholders in the Universal Basic Education programme to handle the disbursement of the funds in the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.
2. Anti-corruption agencies should be used to monitor how the funds is to be used in the UBE programme
3. The government should ensure the funds after the removal are released according to planned schedules.

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