The Universal Basic Education Policy (UBE) and the Right to Education in Rural Nigeria

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Abstract:*The UBE policy is the product of Nigeria's commitments to international agreements on education and human rights on the aegis of the United Nations such as the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education For All (EFA), and the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs) to mention a few. It stipulates that, "Basic education shall be universal, free and compulsory". The essence is to guarantee quality basic education for all. However, in the implementation of the UBE policy; the rural dwellers have been excluded. In addition, quality has not been assured. This paper discusses the UBE policy in relation to the education rights of the rural dwellers that constitute 70% of Nigeria's population. Finally, it suggests ways of realizing the objectives of the policy in rural Nigeria.*

Keywords: Basic Education, Human Rights, Rural, Policy

Introduction

Education is a highly veritable commodity for the emergent global societies that no developing nation can continue to ignore because it is acknowledged as a major determinant of national development in all its ramifications. In fact, education has become a major determinant of living standards. Consequently; nations and individuals with limited or no access to the skills, knowledge and dispositions fostered by education will fall behind others in developmental strides. Hence the level of education, in terms of access to and quality is the mirror of the nation's level of development. In recognition of the fact that quality education is an indispensable resource that engineers and sustains national development, the United Nations declared education a human right. This implies that limited access to and or poor quality education are infractions of human rights of the victims.

Nigeria is a state party to international and regional instruments/laws on education. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention against Discrimination in Education, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child – CRC, The African Union Charter On The Rights And Welfare Of The Child, Copenhagen Declaration, Education for All-EFA initiative, Dakar Framework of Action and the Millennium Declaration (2000). In line with her commitments to these international and regional laws on education rights, Nigeria has embarked on various education reforms over the years. One of these reforms is the promulgation of the UBE Act of 2004. (NERDC).

The UBE policy guarantees basic education for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, ethnic origin and place of residence/location. The implementation of the UBE policy is yet to actualize its goals; in fact, it has missed its targets. This is sustained by the recent revelation that over 10.5 million Nigerians of primary school age are out of school. Non school

attendance is highest among the states in the North West and North East zones; 72% of primary age children never attended school in Bornu state. According to the US Embassy in Nigeria (2012) the factors influencing primary school drop-out are monetary cost (32%),Insufficient Interest (26%), Labour Needed (16%), Unlikely Able to Join Junior Secondary School (JSS) (9%), Unfavourable Distance (7%), Hard Enough Schooling (6%) and Poor Quality School (4%). In addition; is the failure of adult education programmes especially in the rural areas of Nigeria? The most recent National Literacy Survey reveals that literacy rate in the urban areas is 74.6 % as against 48.7% in the rural areas. Also in 17 out of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, the adult literacy rates range from 14.5% to 49.3% (NLS,2010).This clearly shows that most of the illiterate and uneducated population are rural dwellers. It is also an indication of inequity of access to and that quality of basic education is not assured. These situations constitute infractions of the education rights of rural dwellers in Nigeria.

Context

The Federal Republic of Nigeria comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These states are grouped into six geo-political zones for political expedience: North West, North East, North Central, South South, South West and South East. (Eme-Uche, 2010) There are 774 local government areas in Nigeria. (FGN,1999). Nigeria is the most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated population of 168 million.70% of this population are rural dwellers.

Evidence from the Rural Poverty Report 2011 (IFAD, 2010) shows that rural poverty is very high in Africa (excluding North Africa). In Nigeria, poverty, illiteracy, disease and isolation characterize the rural areas. Socio – economic amenities are inadequate or not available in most of the locations. The dominant occupation of Nigeria's rural dwellers is subsistence agriculture. This has its toll on the rural children because families are compelled by their circumstances to engage them in farm work and other income generating ventures. This has its implications for school enrollment, attendance, retention and the performance of the children at school. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria and developing nations. It is also a feature of more developed nations like the United States of America where poverty equally ravages rural dwellers. O'Hare (2009) observes that poor children living in America face significant challenges just as their urban counterpart;but many problems areexacerbated by their isolation and limited accessto support services that are common in urban areas.

Background to the Universal Basic Education Policy

The first education reforms in Nigeria were initiated by the then Western Region and Eastern Region governments in 1955and 1957 respectively. This was most expedient because of the need to revise the colonial education curriculum to make it responsive to the needs of the emergent nation, Nigeria. These efforts although ground breaking at that time, were limited in their scope of application and curriculum content. The first national and large scale initiative was the free Universal Primary Education scheme launched by President Obasanjo in 1976. Itresulted to a phenomenal increase in access to education at all levels. At the basic education level, school enrollment moved up from 6million to 12 million.(Essn,1976). The UPE was free and universal. This was perhaps the world's highest rate of education expansion, but also, it set in motion the greatest crisis in education in the country. (Ukeje, 1998).

The identified constraints of the UPE policy were inadequate funding, poor infrastructural facilities, insufficient qualified teachers, poor planning, inaccurate data, poor

supervision and monitoring of the programme (Denga, 2000; Ocho, 2005; Maduewesi, 2005). It is important to note that although the government declared the UPE scheme universal and free, schools imposed dues and levies for the provision, maintenance and/or improvement of facilities and services. These levies were, in some cases, higher than fees paid before the UPE scheme. In addition, parents and guardians assumed responsibilities for other school needs of their children/wards such as school uniform, shoes, text books, exercise books, transportation etc. These made the UPE scheme far from being free and limited to those who could pay the bills. Consequently, rural and urban poor children whose parents could to pay the bills were excluded. The UPE scheme provided six years of free primary education; however it was not compulsory. So the state did not assume responsibility for the education rights of the child. This was in contravention of Nigeria's commitments to the earlier mentioned international/regional education rights laws.

The UBE Act was promulgated in 2004, that is, 28 years after the UPE was launched. The state assumed full responsibility for the child's education hence the free and compulsory component of the Act. The UBE (2004) and the National Policy on Education-NPE (2004) are the instruments for the realization of the six EFA goals,Goal 2 of the MDGs–Universal Primary Education and the home grown National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Vision 20, 20;20.

Education as a Human Right

The indispensability of education in the fostering, protection and sustenance of the dignity of the human person is incontrovertible. This fact informed the collective efforts of the international community individually, at the state and corporately at the international/ regional levels on the aegis of international/regional bodies to guarantee unfettered access to basic education. The United Nations and its agencies have been in the forefront of this struggle. Nigeria is a signatory to significant international human rights laws /instruments on education rights that have and are still influencing education reforms in Nigeria. Nigeria is a state party to the following international /regional human rights laws that guarantee the right to basic education:

A.Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Article 26 states: (1) Everyone has the right to education; Education shall be free, at least, in the elementary and primary stage. Elementary education shall be compulsory.

B. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
According to Article 13 (1) primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all.

C. Convention against Discrimination in Education
Articles 3 and 4 mandate State parties to undertake to discontinue any practice which involves discrimination in education and to make primary education compulsory and free.

D. Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Articles 2, 5, 10 and 12 protect the education rights of women and the girl-child.

E. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
Article 28 of this convention acknowledges the rights of the child to unlimited access to free and compulsory primary education.

F. World Declaration on Education for All, (EFA)
Article1 and Preamble of EFA (1990) provide that Education is a fundamental human right of all people men and women of all ages throughout the world…

G. Declaration and Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development adopted during the UN Copenhagen World Summit
Commitment 6 unequivocally stresses the commitment of State to the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education for all without any form of discrimination.

H. The Dakar Framework of Action, Captioned Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments adopted by the World Forum on Education.
(i) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
(ii) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

I. Millennium Declaration OF 2000: Goal two is the eradication of illiteracy through compulsory free basic education.

J.African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child-1990 guarantees every child's right to education.

K. ILO Convention 182 on Age Employment and ILO Convention 138 on Elimination of Worse Forms of Labour
Nigeria is a signatory to the above instruments on education rights. They have had tremendous impact on the education policies of the Nigerian state. Policies and actions of government taken to safeguard education rights include;
Constitutional Provisions:In chapter 11 of the 1999 constitution is on the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy clearly state Nigeria's educational objectives in section 18 thus:

1. Government should direct its policies towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate education opportunities at all levels.
2. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end government shall as and when practicable provide…
    (a) Free compulsory and universal primary education.

National Policy on Education –NPE (2004)

The need for a National Policy on Education (NPE) came to the fore after the National Curriculum Conference of 1969. A follow up seminar on the conference was convened in 1973 with the mandate of fashioning a national policy on education for Nigeria. The recommendations of the seminar were adopted as the National Policy on Education for Nigeria, which was published in 1976. It was revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. The revisions were necessitated by policy changes and the need to upgrade the policy in line with national objectives. Sec. 3(15) of the NPE (2004) provides that …basic education shall be of 9-year minimum duration comprising of 6 years of primary education and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. It shall be free and compulsory.

However, the process of the review of the NPE (2004) initiated by the National Council of Education (NCE),which is the highest education policy making body in Nigeria, is

on-going. The NCE has mandated the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to review the curriculum content of the NPE to accommodate the 9 years basic education policy, new issues like the HIV/AIDS and to make it relevant to national economic reforms initiatives such as National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

The Child Rights Act of 2003

The Child Rights Act of 2003 is a product of the domestication of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African child. This Act guarantees unlimited access of any Nigerian child to compulsory, free and Universal Basic education. It also protects the child from discrimination and exploitation. (UNICEF, 2007).

Universal Basic Education Act – 2004

The UBE Act is an educational reform policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria with the goal of increased access and to assure quality. The Vision of the UBE is:

> At the end of 9 years of continuous education, every child through the system should be acquire appropriate level of literacy,numeracy .communication, manipulative and life skills and be employable, useful to himself and the society at large by possessing relevant ethical, moral and civic skills.

The objectives of the UBE:

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a commitment to its vigorous promotion
2. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality, and efficiency)
4. Catering for the learning needs of young persons, who for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling, through appropriate approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning (Obanya, 2010 p. 12**)**

In line with the UBE Act, government established the UBE Commission headed by an Executive Secretary. UBE Boards were set up at the State and Local Government levels. The agencies comprise the administrative machinery for the implementation and supervision of the UBE Scheme in conjunction with the federal and state ministries of education and state education Boards.

There is also the Vision 20, 20:20; its goal in the education sector is to ensure that all children irrespective of ethnicity, gender, or disability, complete a full course of basic education which is 12years of formal education comprising 3 years pre-primary, 6 years primary and 3 years Junior Secondary School.

UBE Policy in Rural Nigeria

The UBE policy like its precursor has been besieged with daunting problems in the implementation stage generally. Rural education is fraught with many challenges; the most critical being environmental, pupil and teacher related issues. These challenges have direct

impact on access, quality of education and consequently the realization of the UBE and education rights in rural Nigeria. Eme-Uche (2008) classified the barriers to the education rights of the child into (a) factor that hinder schooling and (b) factors that hinder the realization of the NPE (2004) and the UBE (2004). The identified factors that hinder access to schooling include social-economic, cultural and religious; while the factors that hinder the realization of the objectives of the NPE (2004) and the UBE (2004) arecurriculum issues,teacher related factors, poor planning, lack of political will to enforce the education rights of the child and poor quality education. These problems persist and continually impinge on the right to education but the situation is further exacerbated in the rural areas of Nigeria due to the obvious character of the rural populace and the rural areas of Nigeria. To better appreciate the barriers to the realization of the education rights the rural populace; it will be discussed with the EFA goals and the UBE (2004) which are the instruments for their realization in Nigeria in view.

The National Action Plan (NAP) of UBE and its targets ensure that access to basic education is achieved by 2015, through the following strategies:

- ensuring that by 2009, 100% of all children of official school age (6-11) including girls are enrolled full-time in primary school or in an equivalent education programme;
- ensuring that by 2015, all children, girls as well as boys of primary school age, are enrolled in primary school or its equivalent;
- improving the school completion rate by 30% to an overall rate of over 90% of those in primary schools by 2010;
- increasing by 50% in 2010 the number of children with disabilities to be mainstreamed into primary school;
- ensuring the achievement of 90% transition rate from primary to junior secondary school;
- ensuring that by 2015, 80% of children up to the age of fifteen are enrolled in school or in an equivalent education programme; and
- reducing by 80% in 2015, the percentage of working children of school age, as well providing those children still working, access to relevant basic education.

None of the targets of the UBE Plan of Action has been and would likely be met by 2015 in Nigeria giving the status of education in Nigeria as documented in the EFA Global Monitoring Reports on Nigeria(2009-2013). The rural education sector is at a higher risk of realizing these afore stated targets which are benchmarks for education rights.

Goal One of the six EFA goals states: Expand and improve early childhood education care. Early childhood care and education was the theme of 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report. Section 14 (a) of the NPE makes the provision of pre-primary education the responsibility of government and community and private organizations. However this all important level of education has been left to private proprietors. This has limited access of poor rural children to this stage of basic education .this situation is replicated in Tanzania where rural classes have larger groups and less qualified teachers, this is irrespective of the national educational policy that specifies the same standards for pre-primary education regardless location. The value of pre-primary school enrollment was 13.91% as at 2010.(UNESCO,2010).This situation has persisted. The EFA (2012) notes that participation in pre-primary education is low and inequitable with the sub-Saharan Africa recording the lowest enrollment of 17% only; with Nigeria at 14% which is below the sub-regional average. According to EFA (2012) about two out of three children from the richest 20% of households attend pre-school, compared with less than one in ten from the poorest 20% of

households. This neglect of pre-school level by the government has serious implications for standards and quality of teaching at this level; and consequently, the implementation of the UBE policy in rural Nigeria.

EFA Goal 2, MDGs Goal 2, and UBE provide free and compulsory Universal Primary Education by 2015. Unfortunately; with only a few days to the EFA target of 2015 for attaining universal primary education, Nigeria is not likely to realize it. Since 1999, the number of out of school children has increased from 7.4 to 10.5 million. The primary net enrollment has fallen in Nigeria, from 61% of children of primary school age in school in 1999 to 58% in 2010. (UNESCO, 2012). This is more so in the rural areas of Nigeria where poverty and many years of neglect has made education unattractive to the rural populace. Irrespective of the fact that the UBE policy makes education free and compulsory, it has not been enforced in reality; 58% of girls from poor rural household have not had the chance to go to school. (ibid). Also; the hidden costs of schooling makes education beyond the reach of the rural poor. Parents are required to pay for books, levies, examination,sports, and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fees to mention a few of them. This situation limits access to education; and principally, account for the low enrollment in rural schools. In effect; the children of the poor rural dwellers are denied their education rights in the context of the UBE because their parent's inability to pay service fees. All efforts by the government to check this trend have been ignored because the schools argue that the government does not provide the material resources needed for the teachers and students in teaching and learning. This is also a product of inadequate funding of education. Education budgets have been a far cry from the 26% of national budget recommended by the UNESCO. This informs Otive's (2007) submission that the greatest challenge facing education is inadequate funding by federal, states and local governments.

This brings to the fore the issue of rural poverty and education rights. It is very apt to interrogate the connect between the UBE policy, poverty and education rights in rural Nigeria. School age children in the rural areas of Nigeria are fully engaged by their families in farm work and other income generating ventures to augment family income for basic necessities of life. This affects school enrollment, attendance and completion of basic education.

Nigeria is a signatory to the CRC and all ILO conventions on child labour that classify all forms of labour that limit the child's access to education as exploitative child labour. The UBE policy makes education free and compulsory, and thus attracts sanction. This brings to the fore the issue of enforcement of the UBE policy. This paper argues that rural poverty is a major snag to the realization of the UBE policy in rural Nigeria. In view of this scenario it is apt to ask if the children of the poor rural dwellers can be exempt from exploitative labour. This makes the enforcement of sanctions for exploitative child labour by rural dwellers. In view of this scenario, none of the objectives of the UBE policy's goals is attainable in rural Nigeria. This implies gross infractions of education rights of rural dwellers. Goal three of EFA stresses equitable access to learning and life skills programmes; but this has not been the case. The rural areas have been excluded from adults learning programmes, this account for the huge gap in literacy rates between the urban and rural areas with 74.6% against 48.7% respectively. In cases where they have been provided, the populace do not patronize them because of lack of awareness of the import and existence of the programmes (Eme-Uche, 2010) as evidenced by the NLS(2010) that revealed that only 500,000 of the 4 million illiterates are enrolled in literacy programmes. There are also 3.5 million nomadic school-aged children with only 450,000 of them accessing any form of schooling; most of the

programmes are urban based; this automatically excludes the rural dwellers. This is more so because irrelevance of the school curriculum to the needs and aspirations of rural dwellers. Ismail (2007) suggest that curriculum content of schools is too foreign for the pastoralists. Instead of teaching pastoral procedures, formal schools spend more time teaching history and cultures the pastoralists do not about and do not have interest in. In the same vein, MulHall (2001) observes that rural schools rarely adapt the curriculum to local needs. THE rejection of formal schooling by sections or groups in Nigeria is anchored in the belief that schools are agencies for acculturation that alienate young people and children from their religious, and cultural beliefs/practices.Access has been also hindered by gender discrimination against the girl child and women in education.

Goal 4 of EFA is on achieving 51% in adult literacy rates and is in tandem with one of the objectives of the UBE policy on ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Realizing this goal is largely dependent on EFA Goal three on equitable access. Literacy rates in rural areas of 48.7% are lower than the 51% EFA benchmark by the 2015. It is important to note the huge regional disparities with a range of 92% (Lagos) to 14.5% in Bornu(NLS,2010). This is a pointer to limited access to and quality of basic education in the rural areas of Nigeria. It is important to note in Nigeria, 17 out of the 36 states are at risk of achieving Goal 4 of the MDGs because of the high incidence of adult illiterate persons in the rural communities. This has adverse effects on rural education; school children do not have the support they require from their parents to well in their school work and assignments. Hence the education rights of the rural dwellers as in NPE (2004) and UBE Act (2004) are not guaranteed in rural Nigeria.

The fifth EFA goal is the elimination of gender disparities. This is a major barrier to education rights in rural Nigeria. The rural populace of Nigeria still has strong ties to cultural and religious practices that discriminate against the girl-child and women generally. Prominent if the culture of male preference that is further exacerbated in the context of rural poverty. In cases where resources are meager, the girl-child is withdrawn from school to engage in income generating ventures while the boy-child, that is, the future bread winner of the family, is allowed to continue his education. Girls are also the victims of gender bias division of labour. Obanya (2003) notes that household chores tend to be the exclusive preserve of the girl-child and this affects the willingness to send girls to school and the capacity of girls to cope with school work. Investing in girls' education is also considered a waste of limited family resources by these rural dwellers since the girls eventually get married and leave the family.

Cultural and religious beliefs and practices also sustain gender disparities in education with the girl-child and women at a disadvantage; especially in the northern states of Nigeria. They include girl-child betrothal, early marriage, confinement and restriction of the movement of girls/women and abysmally low status of women in general. All these acts that have been defended along cultural and religious lines constitute infractions of all international human and education rights laws of the victims and, specifically, limit the realization of the UBE policy in rural Nigeria.

EFA Goal 6 is on improving all aspects of the quality of education. The quality of education is the product of the inputs made. This relates to the school environment in terms of facilities and instructional resources that are readily available for teaching and learning;

human resources that comprise the availability of well-motivated quality teachers, support staff, caliber of school leadership, the administrative and regulatory systems. All these inputs are largely dependent on funding.

Even though the funding of the basic education system has been inadequate, these funds have been misappropriated by responsible government officials. The former Minister for Education, Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili alleged that some state governors divert UBE funds ear marked for teacher recruitment to argument teacher shortages to other purposes like election campaigns (Olufowobi, 2013). Also is the inability of state governments to access UBE fund is a major setback in the implementation of the UBE policy. According to the Minister of State for Education, Barr Wike:

> States have not accessed N41 billion for the UBE scheme. Nothing can justify the situation where billions of naira meant toexpand access and improve the quality of basic education delivery are deliberately left un-accessed and, therefore, un-utilized, while the problems facing effective basic education deliver continue to stare at us as a nation (Laide, 2014).

The impact of inadequate funding of education is most critical in the rural areas of Nigeria. It manifests as poor learning environment, poor working conditions for teachers, inadequate supply and poor quality instructional resources, teacher shortages and retention r to mention a few. This state of education in the rural Nigeria is a challenge to the realization of education rights in rural Nigeria.

The quality of teachers largely determines the quality of education. In acknowledgement of this fact, the 2013/2014 EFA Global Monitoring Report warns that without attracting and adequately training teachers; the learning crisis will last several generations and hit the disadvantaged hardest.(UNESCO,2013).According to the UBE Act; the minimum teacher qualification at the basic education level is the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E); this qualification requirement has not been strictly complied with in the rural areas because of teacher shortages. The quality of teacher training is the most significant determinant of teacher quality and the need to interrogate the process cannot be over emphasized. Schools in urban areas usually have more and better qualified teachers than are necessary to the detriment of schools in rural areas. The statistics from Kwara State Annual School Census Report (CSACEFA, 2013) on teacher deployment issues are very revealing.

- Six urban Local Government Areas with 90,582 pupils (45.4% of pupils in the state) have 50.2% of teachers in the state.
- In rural schools pupil teacher ratio (PTR) is as high as e.g.123 in Baruten, 126 in OkeEro,133 in Ekiti,195 in Kalama and 200 in Patigi.
- In urban schools, the maximum PTR is 64, with average PTR as low as, for instance, 13 in Ilorin South, and 16 in Ilorin East.

The above situation is peculiar to many states of Nigeria. The implications of high level of teacher absenteeism on the quality of teaching and learning are enormous. UNICEF (2012) records that a 5% increase in teacher absence rates reduced average learning gains over the course of an academic year by 4% to 8%. In addition, it has resulted to poor school attendance and some rural dwellers have withdrawn their children from schools. High absenteeism recorded by teachers of rural schools is due to lack of commitment to work because of abysmal working conditions and the rejection of postings to rural areas because of the poor living conditions and social exclusion of rural Nigeria. This brings to the fore

teacher deployment issues that must be addressed to guarantee retention of teachers in the rural communities of Nigeria.

Insecurity and the accompanying violence have become intractable challenges to the education rights of rural dwellers. The theme of the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report is "Armed Conflict and Education: The Impact of conflicts on Education Systems." The violent conflicts occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency on the Northern zones of Nigeria have had devastating effect on the education system. Security officials said the militant Boko Haram group had shot or burned to death at least 29 pupils in a boarding school in BuniLadi in Yobe State,North East Nigeria. However, a journalist who counted bodies in the morgue after the attack put the figure at 59 (Ola, 2014). Yobe state authorities said in October that Boko Haram had razed 209 schools, causing damage worth an estimated $15.6 million (11.4 million euros) (AFP, 2014). The climax is the kidnap of over 200 girls from the Government Girls School, Chibok, BornoState. Schools have remained closed in these areas with parents and teachers reluctant to send their children to school due to insurgency and the consequent insecurity of the lives, especially with school children and their teacher being the target.

Boko Haram, which translates roughly from Hausa as "Western education is sin", rejects a so-called Western curriculum. Sequel to the above, Bornu and Yobe States governments have been compelled to close down school even though these states account for majority of the out of school children before the insurgence. Consequently children have been withdrawn from schools and a sharp drop in enrollment. Most of these atrocities are committed in the rural areas and they jeopardize the education rights of rural dwellers.

Summary and Conclusion

Nigeria is a signatory to the international legal instruments on education. The UBE policy is in tandem with Nigeria's commitment as a state party to these instruments that declare education a human right. The NPE and UBE Act guarantee education rights of Nigerian children and are the legal instruments for the realization of the EFA goals and MDGs in Nigeria. Despite these efforts by the various governments, Nigeria is still a member of the E9 counties with 10.5million school age children are out of school; this account for 10% of the global total. Majority of these out of school children are located in the rural areas of Nigeria. The realization of education rights of rural dwellers in the context of the UBE policy has been hindered by seemingly intractable challenges of rural education such as inadequate funding, exclusion of the rural areas, teacher deployment issues, irrelevance of curriculum to the needs of the rural dwellers, quality of education, hidden costs and opportunity costs of schooling, cultural and religious beliefs/ practices, excruciating rural poverty and security challenges. These challenges account for low enrollment, retention and completion at the basic education level, the regional disparity in the literacy rates between the urban and in the rural areas. This situation would continue to jeopardize the implementation of the UBE policy and education rights in rural Nigeria if drastic actions are not taken by government to reverse them.

Recommendations

The strategies or actions to be taken by all stakeholders in education to guarantee education rights of rural dwellers in the context of the UBE policy constitute a research topic. However; this paper will outline some of them. In view of the identified challenges to the education rights of rural dwellers, these recommendations seek to direct attention to their root causes. They include: the alleviation of rural poverty and the development of the rural communities of Nigeria, mass mobilization and re-orientation of rural dwellers on cultural

and religious beliefs that hinder education rights, reduce the costs of schooling, enforcement of laws and actions that guarantee education rights of rural dwellers, teacher training and deployment issues, curriculum issues, security and adequate funding of rural education.

Rural poverty is fundamental to the infraction of education rights of rural dwellers. Government should ensure the alleviation of rural poverty. Unfortunately the poverty alleviation programmes of government have not positively impacted the lives of rural dwellers most of whom still wallow in abject poverty. Enhanced economic status of rural dwellers will free children and youths from all forms of labour that hinder access to basic education. This may include school for food programme and paying families to release their children to school. As part of the efforts to address low enrolment in schools other incentives. The Bornu state government has offered money to parents/guardians that send their children and wards to school (Ibrahim, 2013).

Closely related to alleviation of rural poverty is the development of rural communities by providing basic socio-economic facilities like pipe borne water, electricity, good roads to open up the rural areas, modern schools and housing for students and teachers and hospitals. This will the rural areas more attractive and help in the retention of pupils and teachers.Due to illiteracy rural dwellers are still glued to religious and cultural values that hinder access to education. Mass mobilization and value re-orientation of rural dwellers to make them appreciate the benefits of education will have far reaching effect on the education rights of rural dwellers, especially in the area of discrimination against the girl child and women. According to the UBE Act; basic education is free. This has to be enforced by removing all the hidden costs of schooling that make schooling too expensive for rural dwellers.

The need to enforce all the laws that guarantee basic education cannot be over emphasized. These include the domestication and enforcement of all international/regional human and education rights instrument and the national laws. This can only be realistic if rural poverty is alleviated.

Teacher quality is the product of teacher training. The teacher training programmes should be reviewed to provide for specialized programmes on teaching in rural areas. This will make this class of highly qualified teachers readily available for deployment in rural areas thereby solving the twin problems of teacher quality and retention in rural Nigeria. The school curriculum of the rural areas should be relevant to their needs and age appropriate to engage the interest of rural dwellers in schooling. Security of students and their teachers is a major challenge to the realization of education rights in rural Nigeria. Parents will not send their children to school if the query their security. Government should ensure all attacks on schools and other educational institutions are checked and school children protected in schools.

Underscoring all the above recommendation is the adequate funding of rural education. The ministries of education, the local government education boards and the UBE Commission should ensure that funds released for schools are properly accounted for. The issue of misappropriation and stealing of rural education funds by government officials, government agencies and state governors should be checked by the appropriate government bodies.

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