

## **ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) SCHEME IN ADVANCING GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN BAYELSA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research was to assess the impact of Bayelsa State's free and obligatory UBE program on the academic achievement of female students. The study made use of a correlational survey design for its investigation. Four thousand four hundred forty-five female students from the Ogbia, Sagbama, and Southern Ijaw school zones in Bayelsa participated in the research. Using a proportional stratified random selection procedure, 540 female students, or 12% of the overall population, were chosen to participate in the research. The UBEEDGQ, or Universal Basic Education and Educational Development of the Girl-Child Questionnaire, was the tool utilised for data collection. The study's supervisor and two measurement and assessment specialists from Niger Delta University's educational foundations department checked the instrument's validity. By using the test-retest procedure, we were able to confirm that the instrument's internal stability was reliable. Furthermore, the PPMC was utilized to determine the reliability coefficient which stood at .884. The data were analyzed with the application of model summary of simple regression analysis and simple regression analysis for the research question and hypothesis respectively with the support of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. The study concludes that free and compulsory UBE programme has significant relationship with on the educational development of girl-child in schools. The study equally recommended that government should establish Basic Schools in all the villages in the state and make it free and compulsory in order to increase pupils' access to education and girl-child enrolment*

**Keywords:** *Free and Compulsory, Universal Basic Education programme, Educational Development, Girl-Child*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The growth and sustainability of any economy is dependent on its educational system. No matter how laudable and interesting the educational policies and programmes of any country maybe, the success lies on proper implementation. UNICEF (2014) describes education as a basic human right, vital to personal and societal development and well-being. Education is the foundation upon which all factors of sustainable development in any society depend. Oke (2010) noted that "it is education that produces all human capital that operates all the social institution of society, to deny society the benefit of education is to deny the society the right of existence. Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's former president, recognised the importance of education and in September 1999 launched the Universal Basic Education programme. The program's stated goals include providing "free, universal and compulsory nine-year basic Education for every Nigerian child," as well as literacy and non-formal education for adults, programs to acquire skills, and education for special groups including nomads, migrants, girls, women, almajiri, street children, and

disabled people (UBE Act 2004). In 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program was implemented in order to achieve the objectives of the EFA. The Education for All (EFA) goals, particularly those pertaining to girls' education, are being pursued via its implementation. Promoting and enhancing women's and girls' access to and success in higher education must take precedence. According to Abbas (2003). "The government through UBE will demonstrate concern for the girl child," Jatau (2008) said. With a focus on gender problems, the goals of UBE will work to eliminate any barriers that hinder girls from benefitting from basic education by addressing the gender gap in educational opportunities and quality.

The education of girls is quickly rising to the forefront of discussions in Nigeria's intellectual and political circles, reflecting a broader, more pressing concern for the world's youth. Politicians, mechanics, truckers, teachers, Nollywood producers, and radio hosts are always bringing it up in public. Consequently, it was usual practice to enrol girls in the housework such as cooking, tending to ill relatives and cleaning up after themselves. Agusiobo (2016) asserts that the traditional role of a woman has traditionally included helping out around the farm with her husband's family. Her reproductive effort, however vital, was unappreciated and unpaid.

There was pressure on Nigeria to ensure that girls and boys had equal access to education after the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) by 2000 and the 1993 Pan African Conference on the Education of Girls, which resulted in the QuagaDougou Declaration (Omuhammed 1999). A National, Zonal, and state Task force on the education of the girl child was inaugurated to discourage traditional norms and administrative practices that work against the girl child and her education. This was done as a follow-up action to the recommendations and resolutions reached at the 1993 QuagaDougou Conference in Burkina Faso.

From its first edition in 1977 to its subsequent editions in 1981, 1988, and 2004, the National Policy on Education (NPE) has maintained its stance in support of equal access to education for boys and girls. Every child in Nigeria has the right to an equitable education, regardless of their actual or perceived disability, as stated in the National Policy on equitable Opportunity (2004).

People in Bayelsa state, including parents and the general public, think that education quality is poor compared to what is anticipated. The poor standards might be caused by a number of variables that are said to have causal relationships. Government and citizens alike are very worried about the alarming rate of infrastructural deterioration at UBE schools. State funding for education is pitiful, at less than 26% of total expenditure.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) initiative is an admirable response to the economic and intellectual gaps faced by women, as acknowledged by the child rights convention. Education, according to Melchings (2012), is the only means by which female children may be liberated from the shackles of slavery, forced prostitution, forced marriage at a young age, hawking, and home help service. A crucial to the economic and intellectual empowerment of Nigerian women was the recommendation made at the 2001 conference on the economic rights of Nigerian women: education of the girl-child.

Children under the age of fifteen make up between forty and fifty percent of Nigeria's overall population, as reported in the country's 2005 demographic and survey. From 1999 to 2008, the enrolment of female students in the UBE program consistently outpaced that of males in all six states of South-South Nigeria: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers (Durkheim 2006). Regardless of this enrolment status, the 2008 school census data shows that over 68% of the total number of illiterate school-aged children are females, and that almost 10 million of these children are not enrolled in any formal school at all (Akunga, 2010). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) announced a nine-year Universal Basic Education program to help alleviate the effects of poverty on females. This program ensures that all children in Nigeria, including girls, have free access to elementary and junior high school education. For whatever reason, many people still don't believe that the UBE program in Bayelsa state has made a difference in the education of girls. The need for this investigation stems from the fact that this has long caused the researcher anxiety. This study is being conducted against this backdrop in order to investigate how Universal Basic Education has affected the educational growth of female students in the state of Bayelsa. Both the government and civil society in Nigeria acknowledge that Basic Education is the bedrock of social and economic progress. Nine years of free and mandatory education are promised under the UBE Act (2004). At first, universal basic education was able to increase enrolment (British Council Report, 2014). Returning to its roots, the UBE is an offshoot of the earlier UPE. Launched in 1999, UBE was later put into law in 2004 by the president. Participation in the UBE programme is mandatory and free of charge for all elementary and junior high school students in Nigeria. Six years of elementary school and three years of junior secondary school make up UBE, which is nine years long, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000). There is a chance to fix the education problem in the first nine years with UBE. Nevertheless, there is concern that if the UBE does not adequately invest in human resources development, the plan to educate all children in Nigeria may be for nothing. The Nigerian federal government has instituted a program called Universal Basic Education (UBE) to guarantee that all students get a free public elementary education for six years and a free junior secondary education for three years. Education, in the view of Ifelunni (2007), is like a repurposed old bottle of wine. The author made it clear that this isn't Nigeria's first effort to make education accessible to everybody. There are several understandings of what it means to be a kid in Nigeria. Ada (2010) cites the National Child Welfare Policy (1989) which states that a girl-child is defined as an individual under the age of fourteen. Alternatively, the girl-child is defined as a biological female progeny from the moment of birth to the age of eighteen (18) according to Offorma (2010). The developmental phases of infancy, childhood, early adolescence, and late adolescence comprise this time frame. There is a presumption that the girl-child will mature into a lady and enter into marriage. Due to gender apartheid, girl-children are conditioned to be submissive, to care for the house and the children, and to internalise the idea that they are someone's property and responsibility while they are young, and their husband's when they are adults. As a result, girls do not reach their full potential and are unable to realise their dreams (Ifijeh & Odaro, 2011). In order to achieve a fair, harmonious society and long-term sustainable growth, Agusiobo (2016) looked at the topic of girl child education. Examining how

much progress has been made in girls' education thanks to initiatives by the government and development partners was the primary motivation for this research. This research made use of document analysis. Appropriate human development was the focus of the research, which also looked at local legislation and statements made by international organisations. According to UNICEF (2014), a staggering 10.5 million children in Nigeria do not attend school, with females making up almost 60% of that figure. A review of basic school enrolment data from 1990 to 2010 showed a gender gap that was narrowing, while data from 2014 to 2016 showed an uptick in enrolment and a gender parity score between 0.80 and 1.00. The following were among the suggestions made: protecting the rights of girls and women in all aspects of their lives (development, participation, and survival); increasing financing for education; implementing the national policy on gender in basic education effectively; empowering girls and women with a variety of life skills; and sustaining gender equity.

Ovuru, (2016) investigated on education for all by 2015 in Bayelsa State. The study aimed at examining the attempts of the government of Bayelsa State to provide education for all its citizens. The study adopted a historical approach research method, primary and secondary sources of information were used. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Observations from the information in the sources were subjected to critical analysis and interpretation before conclusion was made. The author highlighted the establishment of UPE and national policy on education to achieved FEA by 2015. The study also highlighted literacy status of Nigeria and Bayelsa State. It was revealed that Bayelsa State Government has renovated all dilapidated structures in the primary schools, but has not established schools where there were no primary schools. It was also revealed that Government of Bayelsa State has not provided libraries in any primary school in the state. It was also revealed that, there is no adequate security in any primary school in the state, and the migrant fishermen education is not functional. It was also revealed that government has not established any computer laboratory in any primary school in the state. The researcher also discovered that there is free education in the state but not compulsory. It was observed that government has not established a school for the handicap in the state. The possibility of meeting education for all in Bayelsa State was aborted.

### **Statement of the problem**

Under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy, which began on September 29, 1999, students are required to attend a public elementary and junior high school for nine years at no cost to them. The primary objective of the government is to guarantee that all children have unrestricted access to a quality, universal, free, and compulsory education for a full nine years. During this time, students should learn basic reading, writing, arithmetic, and communication skills as well as develop their abilities in other areas that will be useful throughout their lives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Despite this, 5.5 million females in Nigeria do not attend school, according to the statistics that are currently available (UNESCO, 2014). Girls' enrolment is 56% and boys' enrolment is 61% at the elementary school level. A larger percentage of females than boys drop out of school in sixth grade, and forty percent of women and twenty-eight percent of men have never attended any kind of formal education (NPC, 2009).

It is very uncommon for girls to be forced to work as domestic slaves or engage in other forms of child labour such as hawking, begging, trafficking, prostitution, or even dropping out of school to earn money. As a consequence, many criminal activities have flourished, including pickpocketing, selling questionable goods, and trafficking in females for commercial sex labour. As a result, a generation of young girls will be born into poverty, illiteracy, and an absence of economic opportunities (Agusiobo, 2016). The aforementioned social problems the adolescent girls face have created a great source of concern to all stakeholders, hence the need for this research work. Therefore, the research problem is to find out whether the UBA programme has influenced the educational development of the girl child in Bayelsa State.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study is aimed at examining the influence of free and compulsory UBE programme on the educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa State. The specific objective of this study was to:

Determine the influence of free and compulsory UBE programme on the educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study;

What is the influence of free and compulsory UBE programme on the educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa State?

### **Hypothesis**

The researchers formulates the following hypothesis

There is no significant influence of the free and compulsory UBE programme on the educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa state.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a correlational survey research strategy for its investigation. Four thousand four hundred forty-five female students from the Ogbia, Sagbama, and Southern Ijaw education zones in Bayelsa State participated in the research. Using a proportional stratified random selection procedure, 540 female students, or 12% of the overall population, were chosen to participate in the research. The research relied on a questionnaire called the Universal Basic Education and Girl-Child Educational Development Questionnaire (UBEGCEDQ) to collect its data. Two measuring and assessment specialists from Niger Delta University's educational foundations department and the study's supervisor checked the instrument for validity. By using the test-retest procedure, we were able to confirm that the instrument's internal stability was reliable. Twenty female students from Jos Secondary Schools II and III in five different schools in Rivers State's Ahoada West Local Government Area (not part of the main research population) were given the questionnaire twice. The dependability coefficient, which was calculated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), was found to be 0.884. The number that was obtained demonstrated that the instrument used to gather data for the research was reliable. With the help of SPSS version 26, researchers used model summary of simple regression analysis to examine the data, while simple regression analysis was used to test the research question and hypothesis, respectively.

## Results

### Research question:

What is the relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and the educational development of the girl child in Bayelsa State?

**Table 1: Model summary of simple regression analysis of the relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and educational development of the girl child**

| Variables                                                                    | N   | R    | R <sup>2</sup> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| Free and compulsory UBE programme* Educational development of the girl child | 556 | .480 | .230           |

A correlation coefficient squared ( $r^2$ )-value of .230 and an  $r$ -value of .480 are shown in Table 1's data. This shows that the free and mandatory UBE program is responsible for 23.0% of the overall variation in girls' educational advancement. A simple regression analysis was conducted to validate the significance of the link between the two variables, as shown in Table 2.

### Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa State.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and the educational development of the girl-child**

| Variables                                 | N   | df  | r.cal. | Sig. | Decision at $P < 0.05$ |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|------|------------------------|
| Free and Compulsory UBE programme         | 556 | 554 | .480   | .000 | *                      |
| Educational development of the girl-child | 556 |     |        |      |                        |

\* = Significant at 0.05 alpha Level; N = 556.

Based on the data in Table 2, it can be concluded that the PPMC analysis is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  alpha level. This is due to the fact that the computed  $p$ -value of .000 is lower than the threshold  $p$ -value of .05 alpha level, which is achieved with 554 degrees of freedom and an  $r$ -value of .480. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that the free and obligatory UBE programme has no meaningful association with the educational advancement of girls in Bayelsa State. It is supported by the alternative hypothesis that the free and obligatory UBE program has a major impact on the educational progress of girls in Bayelsa State.

### Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 2 shows that, there is a positive relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and the educational development of the girl-child in Bayelsa State with a correlation coefficient  $r$  value of .480. This indicates low magnitude with a positive direction.

The positive relationship between free and compulsory UBE programme and educational development of the girl-child means that, as scores of free and compulsory UBE programme increase, there is a corresponding increase in educational development of the girl-child scores and the reverse is the case.

Nevertheless, a statistically significant r-value of 0.000 was reported at the 0.05 alpha level with 554 degrees of freedom when PPMC analysis was used to test the null hypothesis. Therefore, the results demonstrate that the educational growth of girls in Bayelsa State is significantly positively correlated with the free and obligatory UBE program. This study's results are in line with those of Ovuru (2016), who found that pupils do not pay tuition and that the government has given them free textbooks and workbooks. Agusiobo (2016) found that the goals of the UBE include ensuring that all Nigerian children of school-going age acquire the necessary literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, and value-based skills to build a solid foundation for lifelong learning, as well as providing free universal education to all children. This study agrees with these goals.

### **Conclusion**

The researchers conclude that free and compulsory UBE programme has significant relationship with educational development of girl-child in schools.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendation was provided in the study: Government should establish Basic Schools in all the villages in the state and make it free and compulsory in order to increase pupils' access to education and girl-child enrolment.

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