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MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND ATTAINMENT OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION GOALS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

 Owan, V. J.¹

¹Department of Educational Administration and Planning, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria
Email: owanvalentine@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

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Keywords

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The main objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between management of educational support services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in Cross River State. Three null hypotheses were formulated in this study. The study adopted correlational research design. Census technique was employed in selecting the entire population of 2,078 primary school administrators in the state. The instruments used for data collection were “Management of Educational Support Services Questionnaire (MESSQ); and Attainment of Universal Basic Education Goals Questionnaire (AUBEGQ)” respectively. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the null hypotheses were all tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 alpha levels. The results from the study revealed that; management of guidance/counselling services, staff development services, and ICT services are significantly related to the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals respectively. Based on these results, it was recommended among others that; the ministry of education should ensure that there is adequate provision of professional guidance counsellors to every primary school in Cross River State in order to help address the psychological and persona-social needs of the pupils.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature, empirical evidence linking management of educational support services and attainment of Universal Basic Education goals. In Cross River State, no study has documented such relationship with specific focus on guidance/counselling services, teachers’ professional development services, library services, and ICT services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Universal Basic Education (UBE) is an educationally reformed program of the Nigerian Government which is saddled with the responsibility of providing free, compulsory, and continuous nine years of education at two levels. The two levels are six (6) years of primary and three (3) years of junior secondary. Its legal backing was signed into law in 2004 in order to address governmental needs of providing equal and adequate evolutionary opportunities at all levels.

UBE encompasses the following levels of education; Early Child Care Development Education (ECCDE), primary education, junior secondary education and non-formal education for adults who have not been opportune to be educated. UBE was designed to ensure that at the end of continuous education, every child who must have passed through the program should have acquired appropriate levels of literacy. Other skills which should have

been acquired include numeracy, communicative, life skills for onward employability as well as the ethical, moral, security and civil values required for the laying of a solid foundation for a life-long learning (Akpan and Ita, 2015).

The importance of the Universal Basic education to the entire nation cannot be overemphasized because it constitutes the basis upon which all other educational levels are built. However, given the importance of UBE, it becomes useless and meaningless if the program is not properly managed and supplied with the necessary tools to thrive. It is one thing to plan a program such as UBE, it is another thing to ensure its smooth running through proper management and yet another thing to ensure that the goals are attained.

Goal attainment is the process through which human and other resources are mobilized for the attainment of collective goals and purposes (Oxford Index, 2018). Universal Basic Education goal attainment refers to the degree at which the goals of UBE have been achieved. The objectives of the UBE program as stipulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) are as follows: to develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion; the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going Age; reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficient education); catering for the learning needs of young person who for one reason or the other, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision of basic education; and 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 a lifelong learning.

UBE goals cannot be attained unless through proper management and implementation of planned policies. Management of Universal Basic Education refers to the conscious efforts made by the Government and all other stakeholders to ensure that UBE plans are put into actions and are driven continually towards goals realization. In order to make sure that the UBE management is a success, and the objectives attained, eight important policy areas were identified for special attention. These areas included quality and sanitization, instructional materials, funding, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation. These again strengthen Nigerians' confidence towards successful implementation (Agbowuro and Hayatu, 2014). It is the thrust of this paper to investigate the management of educational support services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals.

Educational support services refer to wide range of services offered to both students and teachers to help them discover their individual academic skills and to become self-sufficient, independent, life-long learners. The personnel who offer these services comprise of a broad range of professionals in guidance/counsellors, facilitators who help teachers develop themselves professionally, librarians, and technicians/technologists. They work as an integrated team within network of schools, focusing on the provision of group-based and individual support, workforce capacity building and provision of specialized services. Thus, management of educational support services refers to the planning, coordination, direction, channeling and organization of educational resources provided to aid in the smooth running of the school. These resources are managed against theft, damage, and sustainability. In this paper emphasis was based on three educational support services including: guidance/counselling services, staff development services, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services.

Guidance/counselling services refers to those services that are rendered by specialized professionals (counsellors), in order to assess the psychological and emotional state of the students/teachers, diagnose them and offer to them, proper guidance and assistance based on their individual needs. In addition, the attainment of required moral, ethical and civic values seems to be a mirage due to the dearth of guidance and counselling services in schools (Amalu *et al.*, 2016). In view of this, Amalu *et al.* (2016) investigated whether there is change now that there is the introduction of counselling services vis-à-vis the Universal Basic Education Program. Pearson product moment correlation statistic at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom was employed to analyze the data collected with a self-designed questionnaire—counselling services and Universal Basic Education Questionnaire

(CSUBEQ). The result revealed a significant relationship between educational and vocational services and Universal Basic Education. However, it was found that little relationship exists between – social service and Universal Basic Education.

Staff development services refers to those services rendered to teachers, which serves as a means of updating their knowledge and skills, as well as preparing them for the changing needs of the society. Akpan and Ita (2015) maintained that, to ensure quality universal basic education in Nigeria we need to train and retrain our teachers. Teachers' development programs are associated with the general improvement of teachers in terms of behavior, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and perception and in the performance of their duties.

Ejekwu (2014) investigated the strategies for improving staff personnel for effective implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 720 teachers out of which 120 were from urban schools while 600 were from rural schools. Findings revealed among others that in-service training programs in the areas of sandwich, workshops, and conferences were strategies for improving staff personnel for effective implementation of Universal Basic Education in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of urban and rural teachers on the in-service training programs provided in junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Information and communication technology (ICT) training is another important aspect of teacher development program. Teachers need ICT training to improve upon their job efficacy. In this period of knowledge driven society, teachers need to acquire sound knowledge on how to use ICT tools to enhance quality teaching and learning in schools. Seminars, conferences and workshops expose teachers to new teaching strategies and the use of modern instructional aids in teaching and learning.

Okoli and Okorie (2014) carried out a survey of the adequacy of the material resources required for effective implementation of upper basic education business studies curriculum in Ebonyi State. Two hundred and forty-one (241) business studies teachers participated in this study. A four-point structured questionnaire, with reliability coefficient of 0.81 was administered to the 241 respondents. The results showed that ICT facilities are of low adequacy and ICT textbook provisions are of low adequacy. There was no significant difference between the adequacy of ICT facilities in public and private junior secondary schools; and there is no significant difference between the adequacy of ICT textbooks provision in urban and rural junior secondary schools. The study recommended that government and other stakeholders pool their resources to ensure that ICT facilities and textbooks are adequately provided since education for all is the responsibility of all.

Neji (2016) examined the utilization and implementation of ICT in adult education programs in Cross River State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 70 instructors and 486 learners which resulted in a total sample size of 556 subjects. The findings of the study revealed that the identified ICTs available aided in the utilization and implementation of adult education programs in Cross River State. It was also revealed that the extent of utilization of ICT in adult education programs was significant. The study recommended the of improving ICT services to include: training of staff, encouraging the participation in seminars, conferences and workshops, establishing cyber cafes that allows easy usage of the internet.

Even though it seems much has been done, there is little or no available study in Cross River State which have assessed empirically, the relationship between the management of educational support services and the attainment of UBE goals. Emphasis in earlier studies have been on assessing the adequacy of such services. It was against this background that this study sought to investigate the relationship between the management of educational support services and implementation of UBE in primary schools in Cross River State.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The UBE program was designed to ensure that learners acquire certain knowledge, attitude and skills that will make them attain appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, and ability to communicate. The essence of the program's implementation was borne out of the recognition of the primary level of education serving as the bedrock/foundation upon which higher levels of education are built on. In addition, another essence for the program's implementation was that the previously implemented primary education program in the country did not impact learners with the necessary cognitive, affective and psychomotor development, which will enable them yearn towards becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant. It can also be recalled that the Universal Basic Education Scheme was planned to bring about positive change in our educational system through quality, functional and free education.

Unfortunately, this dream has met bottlenecks, barriers through high enrolment with inadequate classroom space, lack of laboratories, dilapidated infrastructure, employment of unqualified teachers, lack of fund, these have among others hindered the attainment of UBE goals. Teachers' appointment and development tends not to be based on supply and demand, in part due to lack of reliable data, but also because the process is prone to political interference. Even when available, facilities in their very deplorable state would hardly convince an observer that such are materials for teaching and learning, as most of them are very obsolete, worn and torn.

Efforts has been made by the Government of Cross River state in terms of swift payment of primary school teachers' salaries. For instance, the current government of Cross River State now pays teachers' salaries in a timely manner. There is also some level of improvements in the provision and supply of facilities to primary schools in the state by the Government. Unfortunately, this has not yielded any corresponding improvement in the quality of pupils produced. It was based on these prevailing issues, coupled with the poor quality of primary school pupils that transit into the secondary school level that has made the researcher to ponder, wonder the poor management of educational support services could be related to the attainment of the UBE goals in Cross River State.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between management of educational support services and attainment of UBE goals in primary schools in Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the relationship between:

- i. Management of guidance/counselling services and attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.
- ii. Management of staff development services and attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.
- iii. Management of ICT services and attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.

4. STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- i. Management of guidance/counselling services has no significant relationship with the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between management of staff development services and the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between management of ICT services and the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools.

5. METHODS

5.1. Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was correlational research design. According to [Idaka and Anagbogu \(2012\)](#) correlational research design attempts to find the nature of the relationships between a set of

variables. This relationship is not determined by the researcher; it cannot also be manipulated. It is naturally present within a group or sample. The relationship between variables can be positive, negative or there could be no correlation at all. It was on these bases that correlational research design was considered appropriate for this study, because the study sought to investigate management of guidance/counselling services, management of staff development services, management of ICT services and their respective relationship with attainment of Universal Basic Education goals.

5.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised the entire 2,078 primary school administrators comprising 1,039 head and 1,039 deputy head teachers distributed across the 1,038 public primary schools available in Cross River State. Census technique was employed in selecting the entire population of 2,078 primary school administrators in the state.

5.3. Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires titled “Management of Education Support Services Questionnaire (MESSQ); and Attainment of Universal Basic Education Goals Questionnaire (AUBEGQ)” respectively. The instruments were divided into two sections. Section A was used to elicit respondents’ demographic data; while Section B of the former (MESSQ) comprised of 30 items organized on a four-point Likert scale, and was used to elicit information on provision of education support services. Section B of the latter comprised five items corresponding to the five goals of the UBE program which were used to assess the attainment of universal basic education goals.

The independent variables were measured thus: management of guidance/counselling services was measured using items 1 – 10 of the MESSQ; management of staff development services was measured using items 11 – 20 of the MESSQ; and management of ICT services was measured using items 21 – 30 of the MESSQ. The dependent variable – attainment of universal basic education goals, was measured using item 1 – 5 of the AUBEGQ.

The instrument received its face, content, and constructs validity from two experts in measurement and evaluation unit, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, Calabar. These experts ensured that items were relatively clear in contents and arrangements thereby avoiding irrelevant information and ambiguity. Items found to be relevant were retained or modified, while irrelevant ones were dropped and better suggestions made. The reliability of the instruments was established through Guttman Split half technique. Reliability estimates of .86, .89, .93, and .87 were obtained for management of guidance/counselling services, management of staff development services, management of ICT services, and Attainment of Universal Basic Education Goals respectively.

5.4. Procedure for Data Collection/Analysis

The instruments were administered to the respondents in the respective schools by the researcher with the help of three trained research assistants. The research assistants were trained by the researcher on the purpose and the approach of the study. Copies of the instruments were retrieved from the respondents for analysis without any loss indicating 100 per cent return rate. On arrival at the various sampled schools, permission was obtained from the various primary school head teachers respectively before the administration of the instruments.

The respondents were duly informed of the importance of the exercise and the need to provide honest responses to the instruments. The respondents were also assured that the data requested would be treated with total confidentiality and hence, were advised to personally respond to the items there-in and not to share opinion with anyone. At the end of the process, copies of the instruments were retrieved from the respondents for analysis without any loss. This represents 100 per cent return rate.

To ease the process of data preparation, the data collected were prepared on a person-by-item matrix using Microsoft Excel 2016. The data were scored accordingly for both positive and negatively worded items. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the null hypotheses were all tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 alpha level and the results from the analysis is presented in the following section.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis One (Ho₁)

Management of guidance/counselling services has no significant relationship with the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools. The result from the analysis of data is presented in Table 1.

Table-1. Summary of Correlation analysis of the relationship between management of guidance/counselling services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools (N = 2,078).

Variables	Mean	SD	r-cal.	p-value
Management of guidance/counselling services	24.92	8.914		
			.517**	.000
Attainment of UBE goals	24.93	8.986		

**Significant at .01 level; df= 2,076

The results presented on Table 1 showed that; at 2,076 degrees of freedom, the p-value is less than .05 level of significance (i.e. $.000 < \alpha_{.05}$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was upheld. This implies that; management of guidance/counselling services has significant relationship with the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools in Cross River State.

The results also indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation ($r = .517^{**}$) between management of guidance/counselling services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education Goals. The practical implication of this findings is that, an improvement in the provision of guidance/counselling services will lead to an improvement in the attainment of UBE goals. The finding of this study agrees with the finding of Amalu *et al.* (2016) which revealed a significant relationship between educational and vocational services and Universal Basic Education. It was also found that little relationship exists between – social service and Universal Basic Education. Based on the findings, it was concluded that, the future of Universal Basic Education is bright in Calabar Municipality in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two (Ho₂)

There is no significant relationship between management of staff development services and the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools. The result from the analysis of data is presented in Table 2.

Table-2. Summary of Correlation analysis of the relationship between management of staff development services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools (N = 2,078).

Variables	Mean	SD	r-cal.	p-value
Management of staff development services	24.85	8.777		
			.600**	.000
Attainment of UBE goals	24.93	8.986		

**Significant at .01 level; df= 2,076

The results from Table 2 showed that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 2,076 degrees of freedom (i.e. $p_{.000} < \alpha_{.05}$ at 2076 df). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that; there is a significant relationship between management of staff development services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools.

The correlation coefficient (r) of .600** further indicated that there was a moderate positive relationship between management of staff development services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in Cross

River State. In agreement to the findings of this study, the findings from the study of Ejekwu (2014) revealed among others that in-service training programs in the areas of sandwich, workshops, and conferences were strategies for improving staff personnel for effective implementation of Universal Basic Education in junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three (H₀₃)

There is no significant relationship between management of ICT services and the attainment of UBE goals in primary schools. The result from the analysis of data is presented in Table 3.

Table-3. Summary of Correlation analysis of the relationship between management of ICT services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools (N = 2,078).

Variables	Mean	SD	r-cal.	p-value
Management of ICT services	24.98	8.736		
			.445**	.000
Attainment of UBE goals	24.93	8.986		

**Significant at .01 level; $df = 2,076$

The results as presented in Table 3 indicated that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance at 2,076 degrees of freedom (i.e. at 2,076 df ; $p_{.000} < \alpha_{.05}$). Given this result, the null hypothesis was rejected, implying that; There is significant relationship between management of Information and Communication Technology services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools in Cross River State.

The result also disclosed further that; there is a weak positive relationship ($r = .445^{**}$) between the two variables (management of ICT services and the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals). The practical implication of this findings is that, an improvement in the provision of ICT services will lead to an improvement in the attainment of UBE goals. This finding corroborates the findings of Okoli and Okorie (2014) which discovered that ICT facilities are of low adequacy and ICT textbook provisions are of low adequacy. There was no significant difference between the adequacy of ICT facilities in public and private junior secondary schools; and there is no significant difference between the adequacy of ICT textbooks provision in urban and rural junior secondary schools.

In agreement with the findings of this study, the study of Neji (2016) revealed that the identified ICTs available aided in the utilization and implementation of adult education programs in Cross River State. It was also revealed that the extent of utilization of ICT in adult education programs was significant. The study recommended the of improving ICT services to include: training of staff, encouraging the participation in seminars, conferences and workshops, establishing cyber cafes that allows easy usage of the internet. The finding from the study of Neji as presented above is quite relevant in explaining the results of the presented study. It is expected that where ICT tools are provided, teachers should do better and vice versa. This is due to the increase or improvement in the teaching efficiency of primary school teachers as aided by such facilities.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded generally that; there is a significant relationship between the management of educational support services and attainment of Universal Basic Education goals in primary schools in Cross River State. The rate at which educational support services are provided in primary schools, determines the extent to which activities in the school will be triggered towards the attainment of set goals. The more primary school managers display effectiveness in the management of educational support services, the more likely will schools be driven towards the attainment of Universal Basic Education goals.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- i. The ministry of education should ensure that there is adequate provision of professional guidance counsellors to every primary school in Cross River State in order to help address the psychological and persona-social needs of the pupils.
- ii. The government should ensure that teachers are provided with retraining and other capacity building opportunities in order to enable them to develop their skills and adjust effectively to the dynamics of the contemporary society.
- iii. The government should ensure that such ICT devices as projectors, scanners, computers, internet facilities, and other hardware/software programs should be provided by the Government to all public primary schools. ICT experts as well as well-equipped ICT laboratories should be setup by the government in primary schools to promote effective teaching and learning.

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