

# Education as a Tool for the Management of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*Education has unquestionably viewed as immunization ignorance, disease and poverty. On the basis of the above exposition, this paper examined the concept of education, types and functions which education performs in the society. Furthermore, the paper also examined the concept of poverty, causes of poverty and the various efforts made by the Federal Government of Nigeria towards poverty reduction. The paper also examined some related empirical studies on poverty and provided the rate of poverty in some African countries. In addition, the paper advanced various suggestions that could serve as antidotes to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The paper proposed poverty reduction model that can enable education to perform its expected functions.*

## **Introduction**

The Federal Government of Nigeria in the year 2000 introduced Poverty Alleviation Programme with a strong determination of employing all necessary avenues to reduce the rate of poverty, and possibly eradicate the menace of poverty in the Nigerian society. Again, the Federal Government took into cognizance the effects of poverty on the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria and therefore saw the urgent need to combat poverty. Since independence in Nigeria, indicators of poverty have been traced to unemployment, illiteracy as well as other anti-social behaviours in the society. Furthermore, Philips (1989) opined that poverty could lead to ignorance, disease and above all untimely death. He also remarked that most Nigerians cannot afford good and essential things of life due to poverty.

On the basis of the above explanations, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999 formally launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme with the following laudable objectives:

- (i) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education;
- (ii) The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- (iii) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;

- (iv) Catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches and;
- (v) 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.

The above laudable objectives of UBE if properly implemented could go a long way in reducing the poverty rate in the Nigerian society. Functional education is concerned with inculcation of appropriate skills abilities and competences for self-reliance of the recipients.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Education is the most powerful instrument of social change. It also determines the socio-economic and political development of any given society. It is the greatest asset a society can boast of and legacy which any well-meaning society should hand down from generation to generation. On the basis of the above explanation, the relevant literature on the topic for discussion was examined on the following sub-topics:

- (i) Education
- (ii) Types of education
- (iii) The functions of education
- (iv) The concept and causes of poverty
- (v) Management
- (vi) Efforts of the Federal Government towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Education**

The term education is capable of various interpretations, and like any other terminology, there is a problem of consensus of definition. Due to its flexible nature, most specialists in the field of education have defined it variously. For example, Fafunwa (1976) defined education as a process by which one acquires knowledge, information and skills in order to be useful to oneself, family and the society at large.

Again, Adarlegbe (1969) also defined education as a process which enables a person not only to be able to read and write and calculate, but also to be proficient in a given job to enable him fix himself for living in a society. Furthermore, Dewey (1947) defined education as a process of developing those capacities in the individual, which will enable him control his environment and fulfil his responsibilities in the society.

Generally speaking education serves the function of developing an individual socially, physically, mentally, intellectually, psychologically and emotionally.

From the various definitions of education advance above, it could deduced that education goes beyond literacy alone but it can be expanded to include the acquisition of functional skills, moral identity, and ambition to succeed in life and to improve the society. For individual, education means and provision of opportunity to realize one's potential goals and ambitions in life.

The five main national objectives of Nigeria as stated in the National Development plan and clearly spelt in the National Policy on Education (2004) are:

- a) a free and democratic society
- b) a just and egalitarian society
- c) a united strong and self-reliant nation
- d) a great and dynamic economy and
- e) a land full of opportunities for all citizens.

### **Types of Education**

Ayandele (1966) classified education into three namely: formal, informal and non-formal education. According to him formal education could be viewed as any form of education which is generally accepted. He went further to explain that formal education takes place in a regular classroom situation. It has a pre-planned curriculum of activities and requires the service of specially trained teachers. He concluded by saying that formal education means schooling and that all teaching and learning process that take place in conventional classrooms could be regarded as formal education. Some examples are the regular primary, secondary and tertiary education, which are controlled by the government through educational agencies.

In contrast, informal education is an aspect of socialization. It is the type of education, which fits individual into the established norms, values and the traditions of the society. Fafunwa (1976) asserted that unlike formal education, informal education has no well organized and pre-planned curriculum, rules and regulations, teaching methods, control and uniform system of informal manner anytime, anywhere. Mostly, teaching takes place through interactions with other older members of education, the family and the community. He concluded by saying that informal education is the type of education transmitted from generation to generation in the typical African societies before the advent of Islamic and Western type of education in Nigeria.

Again, Adesina (1983) defined non-formal education as the learning activities, which take place outside the formal school system. According to him, formal education can be deliberately planned, staffed and financed by either the government or private individuals. For example, most Nigerian students who did not make enough credits for further studies may want to remedy their deficiencies through extramural and remedial classes.

## **The Functions of Education**

The function which education plays in the life of an individual and the society are numerous. Therefore, this aspect attempted some few important ones. For example, Cookey (1969) asserted that education is an agent of social mobility. This presupposes that education is capable of moving an individual from the lower class to the upper class.

Again, Esewu (1983) also remarked that education is capable of developing an individual socially, mentally, physically, emotionally, morally and psychologically. From the above explanation, it could be deduced that education plays the role of developing the totality of an individual.

Furthermore, Taiwo (1966) asserted that education performs the function of enabling a person distinguish between good and bad attitudes, right and wrong behaviour, just and unjust behaviour, social and anti-social behaviours in social setting. From the above explanation, it can be deduced that education performs the function of equipping an individual with the necessary skills, aptitude and capabilities to make rational judgement of one's behaviour and attitude as well as that of the members of his immediate society. Lasser (1997) asserted that the function which education performs could also be viewed as immunization against poverty, disease and ignorance. What this means is that a good education should – all things being equal – provide the recipients with good job, good salaries and other good things of life. Again, it also provides the necessary enlightenment civilization and good personal hygiene which will enable a person live a meaningful social life. In addition, education performs the function of acquisition of knowledge and understanding of realities of life the essence of what the society believes to be valuable and cherishable.

## **Concept of Management**

The concept of management as used in the context of this paper implies good planning, and proper organization and coordination of available resources to achieve specific objectives. This means that the objectives of poverty alleviation programmes cannot be achieved without good programme planning and judicious utilization of available financial and material resources.

## **The Concept and Causes of Poverty in Nigeria**

Poverty is a social malaise, which is precipitated by the incapacity of a state to carry out its functions and the unresponsiveness of the political leaders to the economic and social conditions of the people.

**Table 1: Poverty level of some countries in Africa whose citizens live below one US Dollar per day**

<b>N a m e o f C o u n t r y</b>	<b>P o v e r t y l e v e l</b>
Nigeria	28.9 %
Ghana	29.6 %
South Africa	23 %
Gambia	27.6 %
Botswana	34.7 %
Lesotho	50.4 %
Zambia	84.6 %
Niger	61.5 %
Egypt	7.6 %
Algeria	1.6 %
Tunisia	3.9 %
Libya	6.5 %

Source: UNESCO, 2006.

From the above table, it can be deduced that 28% of the total population of Nigeria live below one US Dollar per day. The table also shows that North African countries are doing better than the countries in West Africa. This deplorable situation calls for concern. Although the study by UNESCO was conducted in 2006, the situation is not very different from what is obtained at present according to Abubakar (2009). From the table, it can also be deduced that North African countries are doing better perhaps in view of their smaller populations and good economic measures that promote accountability and transparency in public affairs.

Poverty has been defined variously by various specialists. For example, Dewit (1970) defined poverty as a terrible living condition in which one cannot afford the basic things of life such as good feeding, accommodation and clothing. Furthermore, Abraham (q945) also defined poverty as a pathetic life situation in which a person lives from hand to mouth, and as a result either finds it difficult to acquire three square meals daily but eats whatever is available to him.

From all the various definitions advanced above, it could be deduced that poverty is a pathetic socio-economic situation in which a person finds it difficult to acquire the essentials of life that can keep the body and soul together. By extension of this explanation, poverty could be viewed as inability to fulfil economic and social life aspirations and ambitions. In addition it could be viewed as an economic and social despondence in which a person finds it difficult to

perform socio-economic functions for himself, family and the society at large (Abraham, 1945).

### **Empirical Studies on Causes of Poverty**

Causes of poverty are simply the factors responsible for poverty in the society. A study carried out by Philips (2000) on the causes of poverty in selected local governments in Niger State of Nigeria revealed a combination of many factors. The outcome of his study showed that illiteracy and low level of education are some of the factors responsible for poverty. This means that illiteracy and low level of education could be a hindrance to securing a good job with a good wage and other essentials of life.

Another cause of poverty identified in a study by Ezequ (2001) in Southern Nigeria showed that unemployment is also a strong factor. Most of the young graduates and able-bodied men and women could not be gainfully employed due to unemployment which is associated with either the government policy on employment, economic situation in the country or the needs of the society.

Another study carried out by Fadipe (2006) on the cause of poverty in the Yorubaland revealed that low socio-economic status of a family could result in poverty. According to the outcome of his findings most families are low income earners and as result cannot provide good feeding, accommodation and good education for the members of their families. The poor socio-economic status of the families could also be as a result of the fact that the people are either peasant farmers, or artisans with seasonal means of livelihood. Again, the outcome of his study also revealed that most of unemployed graduated do not have sufficient capital to embark on self-employed job, therefore leading to poverty and untold hardship.

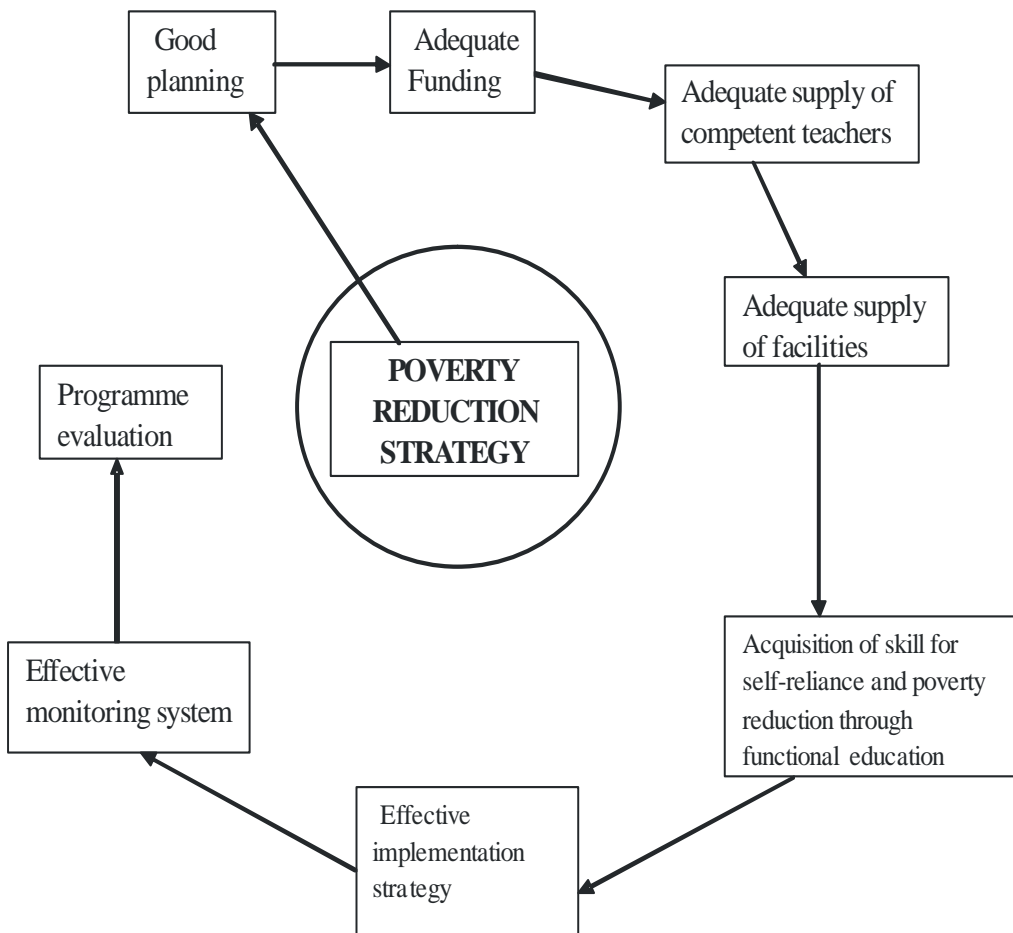
In another study carried out on the causes of poverty in Ebiraland in Kogi State, Aggarwal (2000) asserted that poverty could be associated with the effects of uneducated parents and lack of appropriate education counselling of children. Due to this most children entered the school system with a wrong choice of career. It must be noted at this juncture that good choice of a career can enable them to possess what they are capable of acquiring in the future through the benefits of education.

### **The Various Efforts of the Federal Government towards Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria**

Poverty has been exacerbated by some aspects of the economic reform measures of the Government in the 1970s and 1990s. The policies of reduced government expenditure to eliminate fiscal deficits and balance had led to the removal of subsidies and the transfer payments which make life more difficult for the poor. The Federal Government Economic Policy on Operation Feed the Nation in 1979 and the Green Revolution in 1983 could be regarded as bold steps to boost food production in order to food poverty. These programmes, as laudable

as they were, faced certain national problems such as poor funding, political instability and poor implementation strategy. Other efforts of the Federal Government in recent times include Millennium development goals and vision 20:2020. The success of these programmes requires adequate planning, funding and effective implementation strategy.

**Proposed Poverty Reduction Education Model**



Source: Dare (2006)

The above diagram is a poverty reduction education model. Functional education is necessary for poverty reduction in any part of the world. Functional education therefore, is a form of education through which the curriculum of instruction exposes the learner to subjects that will enable him develop the head, heart and hand. This means that by the end of an educational programme the learner will be able to acquire certain basic knowledge, skill, abilities and competencies that will enable him to be self-reliant. Self-reliance education is an antidote poverty reduction.

Furthermore, for poverty reduction education to thrive, there is a need for adequate planning, funding, supply of competent teachers, educational facilities,

effective implementation strategy and feedback to check and to correct deviation of the planned educational objectives.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discussions of education as tool for poverty alleviation, the following recommendations have been advanced.

1. Functional education through the proper implementation of UBE objectives should be vigorously pursued by the government at all levels.
2. Career development scheme and guidance and counselling should be encouraged in our schools for proper career choice.
3. Government policy on employment should be reviewed and reorganized in such a way that all qualified able-bodied men and women are gainfully employed.
4. Those who cannot attend the formal system due to their socio-economic status should be encouraged by the government to pursue and continue their education through non-formal education programme.
5. Government should encourage active participation of non-governmental organizations in poverty alleviation programmes.
6. The government should assist and encourage the expansion of government and private industries in order to create more employment opportunities for the youth.
7. The labour unions in conjunction with the government should ensure that all employers pay a living wage to their workers as the case may be to enable them enjoy good things of life. A good example is the recent minimum wage.
8. The poverty alleviation programme of the government should be intensified to enable qualified unemployed persons obtain loan for self-reliant employment.
9. The agricultural sector of the country should be restructured and reorganized to ensure abundant food for all.
10. Education should be seen and executed as a social service to all the citizens of Nigeria and not profit-making venture particularly schools run and financed by the government. This will enable all qualified persons to acquire a substantial level of education necessary for a good job.



## Conclusion

Poverty alleviation and indeed the eradication of poverty must be given high priority in government agenda in Nigeria. Investing in basic infrastructure, water, electricity, agriculture and telecommunications is a catalytic function without which other sectors of the economy and society cannot operate. Again, investment in people relates to services for the improvement of the health of the people and the educational development of the population will enhance their performance. These services must always be available otherwise the consequences on the economy and the welfare of the people can be devastating.

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