

## Managing Universal Basic Education for Breaking Poverty Circle in Nigeria

NIMOTA JIBOLA K. ABDULLAHI  
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**Abstract.** The study investigated managing universal basic education for breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. The objectives of this study is to determine the relationship between free school feeding, free uniforms, quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone public primary schools. To achieve this, three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Quantitative research design was used for the study. A self-constructed questionnaire title “Managing Education for Breaking Poverty Circle Questionnaire” (MEBPCQ) was used to collect information for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between free school feeding, free uniforms, quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public primary schools in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. It was recommended that there is need for all tiers of government to devote a greater part of resources to education by giving free feeding to pupils in basic education in order to improve nutritional intake of children school age towards learning, government should also continue provide adequate free school uniforms in order to have higher enrolment of children in schools, reduces school absenteeism as well as eliminating gap between pupils of different background. Furthermore, government should also create enabling quality learning environment in school such as well-ventilated classrooms, electricity, water, good road and the likes in order to encourage learning by doing and increase interest in learning, encourage social relationship, gives room for academic achievement and success, building confidence in pupils as well as lower absenteeism and dropout rate which in turn breaking poverty circle in south-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** managing, universal basic education, breaking poverty circle, Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

Investing and management of education is one of the effective ways to break the circle of poverty in terms of provision of feeding, school uniform and creation of quality learning environment which can be enough to increase community overall educational retention toward breaking the circle of poverty. The poorest children need more beyond reading, writing and numeracy. There are some physical needs needed most like basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and health care which should be dealt with first. Education is hindered by health issues such as malnutrition, illness, sanitation and the likes. Poor children are often malnourished by not getting enough food and are more prone to different diseases which will in turn hampered their concentration in the classroom.

The objectives of basic education according to National Policy on Education is to equip children and young people with skills and knowledge to help them deal with real life challenges and also become active and useful member of society. The aim of basic education is notably literacy and numeracy and is recognized in most countries as a foundation for further development to reduce poverty circle in the country. Effective management of universal basic education can contribute to skills development and help imparting life skill which are useful in breaking poverty circle in developing countries. In Nigeria, most children often go to school in tattered uniform, without shoes, exercise books and reading books. Most parents struggle to send their children to school with the hope of breaking the vicious circle of poverty.

Poverty refers to the deprivation of basic human needs like food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and the likes. Poverty according to Ukwu (2002) can be categorized into two namely: absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is the condition of people not having enough to eat, poor drinking water, poor nutrition, inadequate health,

poor access to education, unfit housing among others. Relative poverty relates to individual, household or community condition with reference to below average standard of living. The so called poverty undermines child well-being in many ways such that the lack of income often prevents parents from meeting the basic needs that will help the child develop. The stress attached to living in poverty undermines parents' ability to devote time and energy needed for the proper caring to be a good parent. It is an accepted fact that education is perhaps the most effective strategy to tackle poverty in the whole world.

The introduction of a school feeding programme for basic education pupils in Nigeria is a way of reducing or eliminating abject poverty that is wreaking havoc in most families who can hardly afford one meal a day and extremely find it difficult to send their children to school. This has for long been a problem culminating in the high rate of dropout school children. It is quietly understood that hunger keeps children out of school and limit their ability to concentrate in the classroom. The feeding program launched by the government will be an important incentive to attract children to attend school. Education is the only key that creates sustainable change for children, families, communities and the entire countries because feeding a child make it possible for the child to learn which in turn make it possible to feed herself and the family for years to come.

In an effort to strengthen the basic education and boost literacy level in the country, free and compulsory basic education, free feeding for pupils as well as free distribution of school uniforms for all students in public universal basic schools in Kaduna, Osun, Ogun, Ebonyi, Kano, Lagos, Anambra States to mention but few for the purpose of creating an avenue for the advancement of a given society as well as securing its futures.

The democratic regime of President Obasanjo in Nigeria launched many programmes to curtail the level of poverty which includes Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001 and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. But, unfortunately poverty rate in the country seems to be on the increase. The State government of Kano State introduced afternoon meals for primary school pupils in April 2001 in order to combat low enrolment rate, poor attendance and poor academic achievement among the poorest population group in the State.

According to the study carried out by UNESCO, 40 percent children aged 6-11 in Nigeria do not attend any primary school while the northern region recording the lower school attendance rate. Despite the effort of federal government in boosting the enrolment of school children in recent years, it is estimated that about 4.7 million children are still not in school. Also poor learning environment has remained a greatest challenge in educational system in Nigeria ranges from inadequate school facilities, classrooms, poor infrastructures, insufficient teachers to teach the high number of school children, poor payment of teacher salaries and the like, hence make the expected result become less effective.

School feeding programme was first established in Brazil in 1950, targeting the children from poor background. Today, it has become a universal right of children under the law. Globally, many countries like China, India and Kenya have recorded successes in school feeding programmes to give children good nutrition and boost health of children as well as would expand access to education. Children with poor nutrition and health naturally perform below average and are more likely to repeat class and to drop out of the school than children who are not impaired. Hungry children have more difficulty in concentrating and performing complex tasks in the class or school.

School attendance in Nigeria is quietly low due to high rate of dropout in the universal basic education because of inability of some parents to provide parent teacher association levels, books, uniforms, and the likes. It is very crucial to note that even when basic education fees is free, there are other related costs such as those for uniforms, shoes, transportation, school bags, feeding among others which the poor parent cannot afford. Also Nigeria education has been characterized by poor infrastructure, poor learning facilities, ill-equipped vocational and technological training facilities. Free basic education requires that all these needs be met within the provision of education and investment in education is key to poverty reduction. These and many other related issues prompted the researcher as to carry out managing universal basic education for breaking poverty circle in Nigeria.

Aloysius (2010) investigated the effect of educational attainment on poverty reduction in Cameroon. 2001 Cameroonian household survey obtainable from the National Institute of Statistics was used as data for the study. The result revealed that educational attainments reduce the probability of

being poor of the employed individual. The study is related to this study in that it looked at educational attainment for poverty reduction. However, the study left a lots of gap in that it did not specifically examine universal basic education as way of breaking poverty circle, also the study did not carried out in Nigeria. Furthermore, it did not considered the free feeding, free uniforms and quality learning environment in school as criteria to break the poverty circle in the country.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on theory of Abraham Maslow hierarchy of needs (1943) as cited in Okorie (2002) said that individual have networks of need that affect their living, starting with basic physiological needs to complex self-actualization. The hierarchy of need identified by Maslow in ascending order includes physiological needs (food, cloth, shelter, sex, sleep and so on), safety needs, social or love need (belongness), esteem needs (achievement, prestige, status), and self-actualization needs (self fulfilment, peak experience among others). Maslow proposition is that as each need becomes substantially satisfied, the next one becomes dominant. This theory of needs can also be applicable in the school setting and also useful to this study in that provision of free school feeding, uniforms and quality learning environment which is part of physiological needs and also serve as a basic needs of pupils that must be satisfied for the attainment of effective learning if truly government want to break poverty circle. The provision of basic needs to pupils in basic schools by government will go a long way to eradicate poverty through education because provision of these basic needs help to arouse pupils interest in learning, gives emotional stabilities, enrich pupil's skills as well as gives full concentration to classroom learning. Safety need is the second needs of the hierarchy, quality learning environment will gives room for safety of pupils in term of building confidence in them, lower absenteeism and dropout rate as well as gives room for academic achievement and success. After the satisfaction of lower levels of hierarchy needs, pupils need move to higher needs which includes love needs (needs to belong to the society), esteem needs (achievement of the academic success), and lastly, self-actualization needs (self-fulfilment, attainment of result or certificate) that gives room for breaking of poverty circle in the society. Therefore, the application of Maslow hierarchical needs in school setting in term of provision of basic needs such as feeding (food), uniforms (cloth), quality learning environment (shelter) serves as way of breaking poverty circle

through effective management of universal basic education.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the relationship between school feeding programme and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo- political zone.
- To find out the relationship between school free uniforms and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in south-west geo-political zone.
- To examine the relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in south-west geo-political zone.

## 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in addressing the problem of the study:

- Do provision of school feeding programme breaking improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone?
- Does provision of free school uniforms improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone?
- Does quality learning environment improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone?

## 4. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and answered:

- There is no significant relationship between school feeding programme and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone.
- There is no significant relationship between free school uniforms and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone.
- There is no significant relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone.

## 5. Research Methodology

The research design used in this study was quantitative research design. This design was considered appropriate because it gives room for the opportunity to interpret, and extract valuable information in order to draw inference from available evidence and reach a reasonable conclusion about the population from the findings of the study. This study focused on the public basic primary education in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria which comprises six States namely Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. There are 8,681 primary schools and 87,685 teachers in South-west as at the time of study. The target population of this study comprised of 5,255 public primary schools head teachers and 50,557 public primary schools teachers in three States namely Ogun, Osun and Oyo. Sample of 361 public primary schools head teachers and 382 public primary schools teachers making a total of 743 participants were selected using Research Advisor (2006) table for determining sample size of a known population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three States out of six States in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria because these three States namely Ogun, Osun and Oyo are the State that is giving provision for free feeding, uniforms and quality learning environment in South-west geo-political zone as at the time of study. While Osun is the only State that provides free uniforms to students out of the three States. Proportional sample technique was used to select 102 head teachers out of 1,492 and 123 teachers out of 16,320 in Ogun State, 96 head teachers out of 1,391 and 88 teachers out of 11,588 was selected in Osun State while 163 head teachers out of 2,371 and 171 teachers out of 22,649 was also selected in Oyo State. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to select 361 public primary schools head teachers and 382 public primary schools teachers. This was to ensure that all categories of head teachers and teachers were given equal chance of being selected.

The data collection instrument was self-designed questionnaire title "Managing Education for Breaking Poverty Circle Questionnaire" (MEBPCQ). The instrument had two sections; section A elicited personal information of head teachers and teachers, while section B elicited information concerning managing education for breaking poverty circle. The 15 items in section B were arranged in three clusters.

The head teaches and teachers responded to the items on a four (4) point Likert type scale as follows: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The criterion mean is given thus:  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 / 4 = 2.50$ . The criterion mean depicts that any item that is above or equal to the criterion mean value of 2.50 is agreed while the item below the criterion mean value is disagreed by the participants. To ensure content validity of the instrument, draft copies of the instrument were given to three experts in educational management and three experts in measurement and evaluation. Relevant corrections and adjustment were made based on their observations and recommendations. Also 30 corrected copies were further administered to head teachers and teachers who are part of the sampled to examine their understanding of the items and to seek their opinion about the appropriateness of the items' statement in terms of the wordings, instructions and understandability of the scales and questions in order to detect if there is any difficulties that may arise in filling the questionnaire. Therefore, some suggestions made were effected effectively before sending out the final copies.

Instrument reliability was ensured by using Cronbach's alpha; the instrument reliability index was .76. The corrected questionnaires were distributed with the help of three research assistants to the participants of sample schools in order to ensure high rate of returned. Effective administration of questionnaires was also aided by the cooperation of colleagues and friends in the sample schools. According to the guide line provided by Stanley and Wise (2010), this study emphasized the ethical issues in assuring anonymity and guaranteeing confidentiality of their responses. The data collected for the study were analyzed using SPSS version 2.0. The data collected were screened before analysis. Missing data was not an issue in this study because researcher with the research assistants administered the questionnaire to the respective participants and make sure the questionnaire is appropriately filled in the process of collecting. The research question were answered using mean and standard deviation while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research hypotheses. The P-value was compared to significant level (0.5) to determine the rejection or acceptance of the hypotheses.

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation response of participants who responded to the research questionnaire on free school feeding and breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Table 1  
Mean and Standard Deviations of Variables on Free School Feeding

S/N	Feeding	Participants Response		Decision
		Mean	SD	
	Provision of feeding programme help in improving the nutrition intake of children school age.	2.87	0.948	Agreed
	Provision of feeding gives room for social and emotional stability.	2.92	0.936	Agreed
	Provision of feeding improve better concentration of pupils in the classroom.	2.94	0.972	Agreed
	Provision of feeding attract lots of pupils to school.	2.87	1.021	Agreed
	Feeding programme help to end inter-generation circle of hunger.	2.90	0.988	Agreed
	Grand mean	2.90	0.973	

(Mean  $\geq$  2.50 Agree, Mean  $<$  2.50 Disagree)

Table 1 showed that items 1-5 have their various mean and grand mean value above 2.50 and high standard deviation score. Therefore, participant agreed that feeding programme improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in Nigeria. Items which the participants agreed to includes; provision of feeding programme help in improving the nutritional intake of children school age with the mean score of 2.87, provision of feeding gives room for social and emotional stability of pupils with the mean score of 2.92, provision of feeding improve better concentration of pupils in the classroom with the mean score of 2.94, provision of feeding attract lots of pupils to school as well as help to end inter-generation circle of hunger with the mean score of 2.87 and 2.90 respectively.

Table 2  
Mean and Standard Deviation of variables on Free Uniforms

S/N	Free Uniforms	Participants Response		Decision
		Mean	SD	
6.	Provision of free uniforms contributing to higher enrolment of children in school.	2.92	0.970	Agreed
7.	Free school uniforms ensure uniformity and sense of belongings among pupils.	2.97	0.936	Agreed
8.	Free school uniforms eliminate wealth gap between pupils.	2.99	0.947	Agreed
9.	Having pupils dress the same gives room for unity, order and good structure.	2.90	1.011	Agreed
10.	Free school uniforms reduces school absenteeism.	2.88	0.984	Agreed
	Grand mean	2.93	0.969	

(Mean  $>$  2.50 Agree, Mean  $<$  2.50 Disagree). Researchers field work

Table 2 showed that items number 6-10 have their various mean and grand mean above 2.50 and high standard deviation scores. Hence, participants agreed with the items that provision of free school uniforms improve learning in school towards breaking poverty circle. Items includes; provision of free uniforms contributing to higher enrolment of children in school with the mean score of 2.92, free school uniforms ensure uniformity and sense of belonging among the pupils with the mean score of 2.97, free school uniforms eliminate wealth gap between pupils, gives room for unity, order and good structure as well as reduces school absenteeism with the mean scores of 2.99, 2.90 and 2.88 respectively.

Table 3

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables on Quality Learning Environment*

S/N	Quality learning environment	Participants Response		Decision
		Mean	SD	
11.	Provision of quality learning environment encourage learning by doing.	2.92	0.957	Agreed
12.	Provision of quality learning environment bring about interest in learning.	2.94	0.939	Agreed
13.	Provision of quality learning environment gives room for academic achievement and success.	2.99	0.945	Agreed
14.	Provision of quality learning environment build confidence in pupils.	2.88	1.002	Agreed
15.	Provision of quality learning environment lower absenteeism and dropout rate.	2.84	0.983	Agreed
	Grand mean	2.91	0.965	

(Mean > 2.50 Agree, Mean < 2.50 Disagree). Researchers field work

Table 3 showed that items number 11-15 have their various mean and grand mean above 2.50 and high standard deviation scores. Therefore, participants agreed that quality learning environment improve learning towards breaking the poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. The items which participant agreed to includes; provision quality learning environment encourage learning by doing with mean score of 2.92, provision quality learning brings about interest in learning with the mean score of 2.94, provision of quality learning environment gives room for academic achievement and success with the mean score of 2.99, provision of quality learning environment build confidence in pupils as well as lower absenteeism and dropout rate with the mean scores of 2.88 and 2.84 respectively.

### Hypotheses Testing

The analysis method applied in the course of the research work was the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients to test the set hypotheses.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between free school feeding and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone.

Table 4

*Free School Feeding and Breaking Poverty Circle in Public Basic Education.*

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	Cal-r	p-value	Decision
Feeding	743	11.69	3.749	742	0.91	.000	Rejected
Breaking poverty circle	743	2.80	1.896				

Table 4 indicates that the calculated r-value = .91 and p-value is .000 at the 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between free school feeding and breaking poverty circle in public basic education. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relation between free school feeding and breaking poverty circle in public basic education is rejected.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between free uniforms and breaking poverty circle in public basic education.

Table 5

*Free Uniforms and Breaking Poverty Circle in Public Basic Education*

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	Cal-r	p-value	Decision
Free uniforms	743	12.01	4.135	742	0.92	.000	Rejected
Breaking poverty circle	743	2.66	2.040				

Table 5 indicates that the calculated  $r$ -value = .92 and  $p$ -value is .000 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is positive and significant relationship between free school uniforms and breaking poverty circle in public basic education. Therefore, the hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between free school uniforms and breaking poverty circle is rejected.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone.

Table 6

*Civic Education and Sustainable National Development in Public Senior Secondary Schools*

Variable		N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	Cal-r	$p$ -value	Decision
Quality learning environment		743	11.86	4.154				
					742	0.92	.000	Rejected
Breaking poverty circle		743	2.71	2.065				

Table 6 indicates that the calculated  $r$ -value = .92 and  $p$ -value 0.05 level significance. This shows that there is a positive relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle is rejected.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The result of question one analysis and findings in table 1 shows that participants agreed with the view that free school feeding improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone, in such that free feeding help in improving nutritional intake of children school age, gives room social and emotional stability, improve pupils concentration in the classroom, attract pupils to school as well as helping to end inter-generation circle of hunger. Result from hypothesis one revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between free school feeding and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone. The finding agreed with Garram children's school (2010) that school feeding contribute to education, well-being of children and bringing children out of hunger. This finding also conforms to Aloysius (2010) that educational attainments reduce the probability of being poor.

The finding in table 2 shows that free school uniforms improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone public basic education. These are, free school uniforms

programme contributes to higher enrolment of children in school, ensure uniformity and sense of belonging among students, eliminate wealth gap between students, having students dress the same creates a sense of unity, order and structure as well as reduces school absenteeism. Result from hypothesis two analysis showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between free school uniforms and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone. This finding agreed with Soludo (2003) that poverty situation in Nigeria is galloping despite attempt by government to reduce the scourge.

The findings in table 3 shows that participants agree with the view that quality learning environment improve learning towards breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. In such that, quality learning environment encourage learning by doing and increase interest in learning, encourage social relationship, gives room for academic achievement and success, building confidence in pupils as well as lower absenteeism and dropout rate. Results from hypothesis three analysis revealed that there is positive relationship between quality learning environment and breaking poverty circle in public basic education in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. The findings agreed with Haq (2005) that the provision of education can break the circle of poverty through giving a rise in earning and fulfilling basic needs.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made as follows:

In order to break the circle of poverty, there is need for all tiers of government to devote a greater parts

of resources to education by giving free feeding to pupils in basic education which will in turn improve the nutritional intake of children school age, gives room for social and emotional stability, improve better concentration in the class, makes pupils to be more interested in school work as well as helping to lift households out of poverty to end inter-generation circle of hunger.

Government should also continue provide adequate provision of free school uniforms because free school uniforms contributed to higher enrolment of children in schools, reduces school absenteeism, ensure uniformity and sense of belonging among pupils, create sense of unity, order and good school structure as well as eliminating gap between pupils of different background towards breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Government should also create enabling quality learning environment in the school such as well-ventilated classrooms electricity, water, good road and the likes in order to encourage learning by doing and increase interest in learning, encourage social relationship, gives room for academic achievement and success, building confidence in pupils as well as lower absenteeism and dropout rate which in turn breaking poverty circle in South-west geo-political zone, in Nigeria.

## 8. Conclusion

The poverty circle can be broken through effective management of basic education in terms of provision of free school feeding, uniforms and quality learning environment. Pupils must be empower to recognize and act on the possibility for change and innovation by giving them necessary basic learning needs towards becoming useful member of the family and society at large. Poverty can also be eradicated if an enabling environment for learning is put in place for pupils and young children. Therefore, in developing countries, government is taking step to break poverty circle in a cheapest way that is why basic education is their focus.

## References

Aloysius, M.N. (2010). The Effect of Educational Attainment on Poverty Reduction in Cameroon. *Journal of Education Administration and Policy Studies* 2(1), 1-8.

- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (FRN) (2013). National Policy on Education: Federal Ministry of Education.
- Garram children's school (2010). Proposal for a grant of \$65,000 for school feeding programme in <http://www.garramchildrensschoolandorhanage.org>.
- Haq, R. (2005). An Analysis of Poverty at the Local Level. *The Pakistan Development Review*. 44, 1093-1109
- Okorie, A.N. (2002). Administrative Theories in Education. The Craft of Educational Management. Femi Durosaro and Segun Ogunsaju (Eds). Indemac Print Media, Kwara State, Nigeria.
- Research Advisor (2006). Sample Size Table. <http://WWW.reseach-advisor.com>
- Ukwu, U.I. (2002). Towards Effective Poverty Eradication Strategies. NCEMA
- Soludo, C.C. (2003). Debt, Poverty and Inequality. Toward an exit strategy for Nigeria and African. Trenton: African World press.
- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (2010). The ESRC's 2010 Framework for Research Ethics: fit for research purpose? *Sociological Research Online*, 15(4), 12.