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### **Managing Education For Poverty Alleviation In South-South Nigeria**

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#### **Abstract**

Scholars believe generally that the higher the literacy level, the higher the standard of living of the people, thereby reducing poverty levels in society. The paper examined how effective management of the three levels of education (primary, secondary, university) will lead to poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The study was ex-post facto and it sampled 260 (males 140 (53.8%); females 120 (46.2%)) lecturers from eight faculties in three universities in south-south Nigeria out of a total population of all teaching staff of the three institutions. A 15-item instrument tagged "Managing Education for Poverty Alleviation: Trainers' Perception" prepared by the researchers for data collection purposes had a reliability coefficient of .81. Independent chi-square statistics was used in data analysis. It was found that there is a significant positive impact of successful completion of the levels of education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State ( $\chi^2 = 235.62; 219.91; 144.46$ , respectively at .05 level). It was therefore recommended that education at all levels should be carefully and properly planned, monitored, evaluated and funded and its curricula re-engineered to be functional, relevant and self-reliant, with the teaching methods changed from the traditional didactic approach to practice-oriented, student-centered, competency-based modes of instructional delivery.

#### **Keywords:**

Managing education, Poverty alleviation, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, education is regarded as instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development (FRN, 2004). This statement suggests that education is a powerful tool which can be used to solve most of the problems facing a nation. For this to happen there is need, therefore, that education should be managed effectively. Effective management of education implies, among others, that education at the three levels should achieve its predetermined objectives. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), education will be effectively managed when students are trained to be literate, be able to count, have manipulative skills, trained in trades and crafts of the community at the primary level (p.14); prepaid for higher education, provided with technical-vocational and other skills for employments at the secondary level (p.18); and also trained for skills in paid employments, self-employments and research at the university level (p.36). The change that transformed the American society was the magnification of the functions the universities were called upon to perform (Bassey, 2005). The fundamental roles of the university in Nigeria are teaching, research and community service. The National Policy expects university education to make optimum contribution to national development, including alleviating poverty (p.14). Babalola (2007a, p.19) believes that Nigerians need education beyond the basic to alleviate poverty at individual level. This implies that while government has embraced the good idea that improvements in basic education will lay a sound foundation for national development, they should not forget that access to quality tertiary education provides the superstructures for increased productivity and wealth on the side of individuals and that of the nation. Nwangwu (2007, p.7) argued somewhere that programmes on poverty alleviation and/or other strategies aimed at reducing unemployment and improving the standard of living of people may not yield the expected positive result unless graduates of tertiary institutions are equipped with skills with which to be self-reliant.

Poverty is a condition in which human beings are subjected to all forms of socio-economic deprivations, leading to a drastic fall in the quality of life (Jones, 2002). Also poverty is a state or condition in human development characterized by lack of basic life skills, good education, productive assets, water low level of energy consumption, poor health, unsanitary condition and a general lack of economic infrastructure alongside lack of active participation in decision-making process as it affects individuals or the community (Udosen, 2007). Poverty can be measured through the use of either the poverty line or human development index (HDI) (Ebong & Mbalisi, 2005). While the poverty line divides the poor from the non-poor; the HDI provides a composite quantitative measure of both the economic and social indicators of human development. In terms of basic needs, poverty is classified as absolute and relative poverty (Anyanwu, 1979; UNDP, 1998). Globally, an absolute poverty line of US\$1.00 per day is fixed by the World Bank for developing countries (Srinivasan, 2004). A study by the World Bank (World Bank, 1995) indicated that poverty line of N395 per person per annum at 1985 prices was a close approximation of poverty line in Nigeria; while The Federal Office of Statistics had earlier derived a poverty line of N395.4 per annum for the moderately poor, and N197.7 for the core poor in 1985. Using the same approach, Ogwumike and Ekpenyong (1995) computed the overall poverty line as N3,360 per head per year. More than 314 million Africans live on less than US\$1 a day (Ifinedo, 2007). Thirty-four of the world’s 48 poorest countries and 24 of the 32 countries ranked lowest on the United Nations Development Programme HDI are in Africa. Poverty is both endemic and widespread in Nigeria and it appears that the poverty level contradicts the country’s immense wealth, as it is reported that more than 45% of the Nigerian population live below the poverty line, while 67% of the poor are extremely poor (chronic poverty) (Kings & Bones, 2000). According to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy

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(NEEDS) document, major causes of poverty in Nigeria include: inadequate growth rate of the GDP, volatility of the oil sector, high unemployment rate, limited growth of investments and technological innovations, low labor absorption capacity, heavy dependence on imports, low savings propensity, growing income inequality, decline in the living standards of pensioners, governance problems (including corruption), limited effectiveness of past poverty alleviation measures, and internal conflicts (Babalola, 2007a). Several World Bank studies (World Bank, 1996a, 1996b) identified other causes to include: low human capital endowment, destruction of natural resources resulting in environmental degradation, poor maintenance culture, corruption and political instability. Others are inadequate access to employment, physical assets, markets, means of supporting assistance to those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty. Also, recent World Development Report (Ekpo & Uwatt, 2005) believes that poverty is caused by lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities; a sense of voicelessness and powerlessness in the institutions of state and society; and vulnerability to adverse shocks linked to an inability to cope with them. Effective management of the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education has the potential to develop and equip the citizenry with appropriate skills, habits, and competencies necessary for self and paid employments and consequently lead to the reduction of poverty level of citizens.

### **Literature Review**

The federal government of Nigeria in 1986 initiated and implemented IMF-World Bank supported adjustment programme (Ovat, 2001). The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme was based on the belief that it would facilitate growth and in the process reduce poverty. Empirical evidence has however shown that the conditions of the core poor have continued to deteriorate unabated. Their real income and consumption have been reduced and hence their standard of living worsened. Using the research question: what are the impacts of existing strategies, schemes and programmes for poverty reduction on the poor? Ebong and Mbalisi (2002, p.125) found that the strategies and programmes have not been effective in poverty reduction because majority of the people are still poor. The strategies adopted by the government included massive recruitment and employment of the poor, development of practical skills in sewing, welding, electrical works, hairdressing, confectionaries and woodworks, cash disbursement and provision of basic amenities such as pipe-borne water, good roads, primary health care and schools. Despite the existence of these strategies and programmes, poverty has been on the increase. Jegede and Fayomi (2007, p.66) investigated the impact of astronomical growth of educational institutions on poverty alleviation nation-wide. The result showed that the impact of these institutions on poverty alleviation in Nigeria has been minimal. About 84% of the respondents were of the opinion that the astronomical growth in the number of educational institutions in the country up till now has not helped much in alleviating poverty among Nigerians. Ubom (2002, p.11) investigated the topic "Corruption: an impediment to poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria", using three null hypotheses: there is no significant relationship between corrupt practices and measures of poverty alleviation among rural dwellers; there is no significant difference between male and female rural dwellers in their degree of poverty; and financial discipline in government does not relate significantly to poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. Data analysis revealed that (i) there is a significant positive relationship between corrupt practices and measures of poverty alleviation ( $r_{xy} = 0.215$ ); (ii) there is a significant difference between the male and female rural dwellers in their degree of poverty ( $t_{ob} = 4.59$ ); and (iii) there is a positive significant relationship between financial discipline in government and measures of poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria ( $r_{xy} = 0.392$ ). The report of the findings, in other words, were that: the higher the incidence of corrupt practices, the higher the level of poverty among rural dwellers; female rural dwellers have a higher measure of poverty than their male

counterparts; and the higher the measure of financial discipline in government, the higher the measure of poverty alleviation among rural dwellers, and vice versa. Researchers in support of these findings included Ukoha (1992), Ochiaga (1994), Ijewere (1999), and Echebiri (2002).

The Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 1996) classified Akwa Ibom State as the seventh poorest State in Nigeria, with a headcount of 72.3% comprising 33.4% core poor, 38.9% moderate poor and 27.7% non-poor. Nine years after, Ekpo and Uwatt (2005, p.124) reported that poverty is widespread and severe in the State with about 57% of the people living in poverty; while the non-poor are 43%, the moderate poor are 29% and the core poor are 28%. Other findings were that poverty incidence varies greatly among the local government areas; poverty is more severe among household heads earning less than N10,000 per year and who are either self-employed, unemployed, or retired; poverty is more among rural residents than urban dwellers; and that poverty is higher for household heads with no access to basic socio-economic facilities. Some key determinants of poverty in the state were identified to include age of household heads and age group, household size, level of education, employment status and types of primary job, income groups, access to credit, sources of food and water supply, and ethnic group. Commenting on the efforts of Akwa Ibom State government on poverty alleviation, Udosen (2007, p.121) observed somewhere that the government was eagerly pre-occupied with empowering the people with a view to reducing poverty, creating employment opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship and sharpening skills. She constructed a twenty-item poverty alleviation perception questionnaire to be answered by beneficiaries of Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in the state. A sample of two hundred and forty beneficiaries was randomly selected from eight local government areas. Data analysis revealed that there is no significant effect of poverty alleviation programmes on the economic empowerment of the beneficiaries in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is at variance with the report of Ukpong (2005, p.22) who disclosed that poverty level is creditably reduced in the state through the programme of Life Enhancement Agency.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used the human development theory as its theoretical framework, since the theory recognizes human beings as the main aim of genuine development and emphasizes the satisfaction of basic capacities for the realization of their development (Ebong & Mbalisi, 2005). Comparing the concept of human development with other concepts of economic development in its report, the UNDP (1995) concluded that the human development concept is broader in scope than the conventional theories of economic development, since it analyses all issues in society from the perspectives of people. Human development ensures adequate building of human capacities and the construction of self-reliance of people. Therefore, investment in people contributes to growth and employment for dynamic participation in cultural, social and productive affairs (Arimah, 2001).

### **Problem**

The federal government of Nigeria had introduced several poverty alleviation programmes over the years in an attempt to raise the living standards of its citizens. Almost all sectors of the economy were involved, namely, education, health, agriculture, transport, housing and financial sector programmes (Ovat, 2001). Other multi-sectoral programmes included Better Life Programme, Family Support Programme, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), including a special package called Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) Relief Package to cushion the effects of SAP in 1989, National Directorate of Employment Scheme, Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure, Skills Acquisition Youth Employment Scheme and NEEDS. In-depth analysis of the actual performances of these avalanche of poverty alleviation

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measures in reducing poverty has been marginal and infinitesimal (Egware, 1997). The problem of this study, therefore, was to examine how effective management of education, especially higher education, will lead to a reduction in the levels of poverty in south-south Nigeria.

### **Hypotheses**

Three hypotheses were stated in the null to guide the study:

There is no significant impact of successful completion of primary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

There is no significant impact of successful completion of secondary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

There is no significant impact of successful completion of university education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Methods**

The survey research method was employed. The population consisted of all teaching staff in three universities in south-south Nigeria (Universities of Calabar, Uyo and Cross River University of Science and Technology) while 275 respondents were randomly selected from eight faculties (Education, Pharmacy, Business Administration, Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture, Arts and Law) for the study. A total of 260 respondents returned the questionnaires correctly completed. The sample size for the study therefore stood at 260: males 140 (53.8%); females 120 (46.2%). The researchers prepared a 15-item (5 items for measuring each level of education) 4-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree tagged "Managing Education for Poverty Alleviation: Trainers' Perception" for data collection. This instrument which was validated by two measurement experts had a reliability coefficient of .81, while independent chi-square statistics was employed in data analysis.

### **Results**

#### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant impact of successful completion of primary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis, independent chi-square analysis was done and the result is as shown in Table 1.

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Table 1 - Chi-square analysis of the impact of primary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

(N = 260)

Primary Education	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\chi^2$
Ability to read	80 (46.8)	180 (159)	0 (42.6)	0 (11.6)	260	
Manipulative skills	32 (46.8)	183 (159)	34 (42.6)	11 (11.6)	260	
Numerical ability	51 (46.8)	186 (159)	20 (42.6)	3 (11.6)	260	235.62*
Trades and crafts	40 (46.8)	136 (159)	62 (42.6)	22 (11.6)	260	
Paid employments	31 (46.8)	110 (159)	97 (42.6)	22 (11.6)	260	
Total	234	795	213	58	1300	

\* < .05; df = 12; critical  $\chi^2$  = 21.03

The obtained  $\chi^2$ -value 235.62 was greater than the critical  $\chi^2$ -value (21.03) at .05 level and 12 degree of freedom. Hence the result was significant, indicating that there is a significant positive impact of successful completion of primary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant impact of successful completion of secondary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis, independent chi-square was done and the result is shown in Table 2.

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Table 2 - Chi-square analysis of the impact of secondary education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

(N = 260)

Secondary Education	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\chi^2$
Technical/vocational skill	75 (58.4)	152 (138.4)	24 (48)	3 (15.2)	260	
Paid employments	59 (58.4)	141 (138.4)	40 (48)	9 (15.2)	260	
Higher education	97 (58.4)	141 (138.4)	19 (48)	3 (15.2)	260	219.91*
Self employment	20 (58.4)	110 (138.4)	86 (48)	44 (15.2)	260	
Clerical Officers	41 (58.4)	131 (138.4)	71 (48)	17 (15.2)	260	
Total	292	692	240	76	1300	

\* < .05; df = 12; critical  $\chi^2$  = 21.03

The computed  $\chi^2$ -value (219.91) was higher than the critical  $\chi^2$  value of 21.03 at .05 level of significance with 12 degree of freedom. The result was therefore significant meaning that there is a significant positive impact of successful completion of secondary-technical education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant impact of successful completion of university education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis, independent chi-square was done. See Table 3 for the result.



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Table 3 - Chi-square analysis of the impact of university education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

(N = 260)

University Education	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\chi^2$
Paid employment skills	146 (109.6)	94 (108.6)	11 (24.8)	9 (17.4)	260	
Self employment skills	112 (109.6)	89 (108.6)	26 (24.8)	33 (17.4)	260	
High level manpower	137 (109.6)	108 (108.6)	15 (24.8)	0 (17.4)	260	144.46*
Entrepreneurship	73 (109.6)	107 (108.6)	44 (24.8)	36 (17.4)	260	
Conducting Researches	78 (109.6)	145 (108.6)	28 (24.8)	9 (17.4)	260	
Total	546	543	124	87	1300	

\* < .05; df = 12; critical  $\chi^2$  = 21.03

Table 3 reported a significant impact of university of education on poverty alleviation, since the calculated  $\chi^2$ -value of 144.46 was found to be greater than the critical  $\chi^2$ -value (21.03) at .05 alpha level with 12 degree of freedom. This finding suggests that there is a significant positive impact of successful completion of university education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Discussion**

Research results reported significant positive impact of successful completion of the three levels of education (primary, secondary, university) on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria ( $\chi^2$  = 235.62; 219.91; 144.46, respectively at .05 level and 12 degree of freedom). This position is supported by the research findings of Ekpo and Uwatt (2005) and World Bank (2000). These findings were, however, different from the research report of Jegede and Fayomi (2007, p.71) that there is little or no (i.e. minimal) impact of education on the poverty level of citizens in spite of astronomical growth in the number of educational institutions in the country. Scholars tend to believe generally that the higher the literacy level, the higher the standard of living of the people thereby alleviating poverty. The findings of Ekpo and Uwatt (2005, p.73) after investigating the poverty profile and economic transformation of Akwa Ibom State corroborate this position that for the highest educational grade attained, poverty incidence oscillates between 64% and 75% for primary, 49% and 60% for junior secondary, and 49% and 64% for senior secondary; while advanced level GCE/OND was 37.96%, B.Sc/HND was 27.60%, and post-graduate was 25%. Poverty is said to be more severe among households with no

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schooling. Education can therefore be seen as a potent means of breaking the vicious circle of poverty.

This report of significant positive impact of successful completion of primary and secondary education on poverty alleviation implies, in other words, that if the quality of educational delivery at both levels is pragmatic and relevant, then products of the system should be self-reliant on graduation and consequently self-employed to an extent, where paid employments are not forthcoming. The provisions made by the National Policy (FRN, 2004) for the primary and secondary levels of education appear sufficient for preparing youths to be self-reliant on successful completion, for instance, the policy specifies that at the primary level pupils will be trained to read and write, acquire manipulative skills, be able to count and compute, master the trade and crafts of the community; and at the secondary level training will be focused on science, vocational-technical education, preparation for higher education and general training in basic skills for employment with the junior secondary being prevocational and academic in orientation (p.14, 18). Unfortunately, this lofty aim of the federal government cannot be actualized because the education system in the country has been abysmally incapacitated through neglect and under-funding for decades – there is improper planning in terms of infrastructure, manpower, and financing to match the explosion in student enrolment at all levels of education (Nwangwu, 2007; Babalola, 2007a).

The finding of hypothesis three (see Table 3) was a significant positive impact of university education on poverty alleviation at .05 level ( $\chi^2 = 144.46$ ). Researchers in support of this position included Dabalén and Oni (2000), World Bank (2000), and Babalola (2007b). Ekpo and Uwatt (2005) affirm that higher level of education and indeed qualitative education give birth to lower, middle, and higher level professionals which negatively but significantly impact on poverty. Thus, the higher the level of education, the lower the incidence of poverty and vice versa. At the successful completion of university schooling, graduates should move successfully to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens and live healthy lives. The current thinking worldwide is that higher education should develop in the beneficiary a certain number of generic skills to a level that will ensure the continued creative productivity of the individual (World Bank, 2000). These generic skills which are transversal in nature will assist to break the artificial barriers among disciplines. It is the possession of these skills that will empower and reposition every graduate to engage himself productively, create jobs where paid employments are absent and thereby maintain a high standard of living.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

On the basis of data analysis and findings, we conclude that it is possible for graduates of primary, secondary and universities to be groomed in such a manner that they become self-reliant at graduation to the extent that they can create employments for themselves and others, where there are no paid job openings.

If education should be managed for self-reliance, self-employment and hence poverty alleviation, then this calls for a complete reorientation and re-engineering of the educational management machinery at all levels of training, specifically as touching: proper planning, monitoring and evaluation of education; curriculum contents and implementation; teacher factor and motivation; adequacy of infrastructure and funding.

There should be proper planning and effective monitoring of primary and secondary education, especially the 9-year Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. Careful evaluation of the UBE scheme will ensure and help to guarantee a more effective programme implementation. Programmes and activities of our universities should be more properly planned and monitored

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by the supervising body (the National Universities Commission). There should be peer and student personnel evaluation and there should also be programme assessment alongside internal self-review (or assessment) at tertiary education level (Bassey & Bassey 2007).

The curricula of study at the primary and secondary levels should be more functionally implemented under the present policy, while the curricula for universities should be re-engineered to achieve the objective of self-reliance and hence alleviate poverty. The focus of science teaching at the secondary school should be to develop the scientific methods, attitudes and scientific culture; while science education at the primary school should be made mandatory (Jegade & Fayomi, 2007). The traditional mode of teaching/lecturing in the universities should give way to a practice-oriented, competency-based mode of instructional delivery with entrepreneurial studies as a core course at the undergraduate level.

Adequate number of qualified teachers should be recruited for our educational system. The explosion in pupil-student enrolments at all levels of education calls for a commensurate increase in the number of instructors recruited so that teacher-pupil/student ratios for the three levels are reduced for effective class management and better results to be expected. There is need to properly motivate teachers so as to reduce attrition rate and increase productivity.

Functional and effective implementation of the programme of a school system calls for adequate stock of appropriate type of infrastructure in the form of buildings for classrooms, lecture theatres, halls, laboratories, workshops, etc.; various types of equipment and facilities; alternative source of electricity supply; and a good source of water supply.

Inadequate funding has been identified as a major factor that retards the progress of education in Nigeria. The clarion call therefore goes to the government in power, private sector, and the public to increase allocations, contributions and donations to the education sub-sector and educational institutions, if education should be goal-oriented.

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### **Managing Education For Poverty Alleviation: Trainers' Perception Questionnaire (Mepatpq)**

Dear Respondent,

It is believed that if education is properly managed at all levels, poverty will be alleviated. Kindly respond to these items as a trainer in the system.

Institution:    Unical (    )                      Uniuyo (    )    CRUTECH (    )  
 Faculty: Education    (    )                      Pharmacy    (    )                      Medicine (    )  
    Business Administration (    )    Engineering (    )  
    Agriculture    (    )                      Arts (    )                      Law (    )

Please place a tick (  ) in the appropriate column of your choice using the key Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Items	SA	A	D	SD
Primary education impacts poverty alleviation through:				
Training for ability to read and write				
Training for manipulative skills				
Training for numerical ability				
Preparing for trades and crafts of the locality				
Preparing for paid employments as unskilled labour (office messenger)				
Secondary education impacts poverty alleviation through:				
Providing technical-vocational skill				
Providing skills for paid employment				
Preparing for higher education				
Providing skills for self-employment				
Preparing for paid employment as clerical officers				
University education impacts poverty alleviation through:				
Acquisition of skills for paid employment				
Acquisition of skills for self employment				
Training of high level manpower				
Training in entrepreneurship				
Conducting of researches				