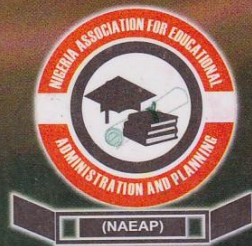


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Management of Basic Education for Poverty Alleviation in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria

Nkang, I. E.
School of Education
Akwa Ibom State College of Education,
Afaha Nsit, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The study took a critical look at management of basic education in Akwa Ibom State for poverty alleviation among the populace in Nigeria. The population comprised 3265 primary school teachers and 235 junior secondary school teachers. A sample of 525 respondents was drawn using the stratified sampling technique based on the three senatorial districts of the state. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level, using the t-test. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire on Basic Education and Poverty Alleviation (BEPA). The two null hypotheses were retained indicating no significant influence of basic education on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. Based on this, it was concluded that the state of management and implementation of basic education does not enhance poverty alleviation in the state. It was therefore recommended that all stakeholders in the management and implementation of basic education in the state should show more commitment towards the success of the programme to facilitate poverty alleviation among the populace.

Introduction

Education, when properly managed, becomes the major tool for poverty alleviation in any society. As observed by Field (2002), education develops the cognitive abilities that allow individuals to adapt to a greater range of complex social situations. Literacy, according to World Development Report (1990), is one of the measures needed to overcome poverty in the world. Schooling imparts specific knowledge and develops general reasoning. It also induces changes in beliefs and values, and in attitude towards work and society. Quoting Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2007a), the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme intends "not only to facilitate the attainment of the core elements of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy

(NEEDS), but also the goals of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There cannot be any meaningful national development unless the "PHD" (Poverty, Hunger and Disease) pandemic is completely eradicated or minimized drastically. This can only be done using qualitative basic education as a springboard.

The need for a functional Universal Basic Education in fighting poverty has been acknowledged the world over. This is based on the realization that no country can attend any meaningful progress and development without a sound educational system for its citizens. Developed Nations such as the United States of America (USA) Britain, France, Russia and the emerging tiger states of Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, etc, long realized the indispensability of basic functional education as a catalyst for poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

In Nigeria, education has been recognized as an instrument par-excellence for effective national development. No nation can fully develop, if majority of her citizens are illiterates and living in poverty. According to Ebonugwo in Ilabiem (2001) about 48.5% of Nigerians live below poverty line. Education has the potentials and it is the "magic key" needed to change this situation. The World Bank's fundamental strategy for poverty reduction recognizes the need for social transformation in its two basic principles: invest in people and create a climate for jobs, growth, and prosperity. It looks to the long-term to help countries go from poor and dependent to prosperous and self-sufficient. This poses a big challenge to developing countries which have to overcome not only internal constraints (such as poor education, corruption, etc.) but also an external environment characterized by unfair trade rules, predatory immigration policies, and shrinking resources transfers. But developing countries have at least one major asset in that they are home to the vast majority of the world's young people: those that really need basic education. Low- and middle-income countries have ten times more inhabitants in the 0-14 year age group than do high-income countries (World Bank, 2003). If their talent and energy can be developed, channelled and harnessed using basic education as a springboard, poverty level would drastically be reduced. Well functioning equitable basic education is needed as a catalyst. This study is therefore undertaken to investigate the relationship between basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Poverty indices in Nigeria

According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) survey 2006/2007, it has been established that poverty has been on a steady increase in Nigeria

since 1960, the statistics further shows that about 45% of Nigerian population live below the poverty line. By 1996 the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) estimated the poverty level in Nigeria at about 66%. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) figure, 55 million, that is 45.5% Nigerians need help. The United Nations report shows that Nigerians' Human Development Index (NDI) was only 0.416 which places Nigeria, the giant of Africa, among the 25th poorest nation in the world.

A sample of statistics on poverty incidence, state by state including Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T.) (2002-2006), from Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) shows that in Akwa Ibom State poverty level increased from 32.0– 67.7 percent between 2002–2006; from 27.6 to 53.0 in FCT; and from 42.7 to 65.6 nationally, between 2002 – 2006.

Education and Poverty Alleviation

Education can be a powerful tool for empowerment and the building of capacity and capability to challenge poverty. In the year 2000, the United Nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank signed up to an international commitment to reduce global poverty by half by 2015 in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two years later, the World Bank published a highly quoted study called *Voices of the Poor* (Narayan, 2002). Stimulated by publications such as Sen's (1999) '*Development as Freedom*', this document gave credence to concepts of poverty that were both subjective and qualitative, as well as economic and statistical in nature. Renewed interest in the Global Call for Action Against Poverty (2005) and such policy initiatives as Blair's Commission for Africa (2005) provide an opportunity for looking at how education might contribute to bringing people out of poverty.

Poverty is becoming widely recognized and takes various forms, including the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or no access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and disease-related mortality; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion (Ogwuma, 1999). A multidimensional understanding of poverty helps us define poverty as "a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights". This definition enables us to see poverty as a subjective experience, an issue of lack of participation and

human assets - a structural deficit which requires a multi-agency response, in which basic education and lifelong learning can play a part.

Education and poverty alleviation are linked because modern societies can become or remain materially wealthy only if they are managed by a large group of educated individuals with the right mix of sophisticated technical and organizational expertise. This expertise, and many of the behavioral attributes that go along with it, are most readily acquired and transmitted through modern educational institutions, of which basic education lays the foundation. Lessons over the last five decades of development assistance point to the critical role of Capacity Enhancement in promoting sustainable development. At the heart of Capacity Enhancement is the importance of intellectual capacity in analyzing national development challenges; formulating policy options to deal with these; mobilizing resources to implement plans within policy choices made; monitoring and evaluating performance; drawing lessons to improve performance including revising policy choices. Capacity Enhancement has three elements; Individual, Institutional and Societal. On the individual level, an enhancement of capacity comes from general education which foundation is laid by basic education. Capacity enhancement is also promoted by professional training and experience as an offshoot of basic education for the individuals. On the institutional level, capacity enhancement contributes to the strengthening of public, private and civil society institutions. On the societal level, capacity enhancement promotes empowerment of the citizens, particularly those infused by science culture (Field, 2002). Empowered citizens consolidate democracy and ensure good governance. These three levels are internally reinforcing. Capacity enhancement is a long term programme that has basic education as its springboard.

UBE and Poverty Alleviation

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the second item among the 37 identified core poverty alleviation institutions in the government blue-print for the scheme. According to Adamachi (2000), the UBE covers pupils of primary school and students of junior secondary school, the disabled, adult and non-formal education. Statistics available show that Nigeria today has over 38, 649, primary schools, 6974 secondary schools, 62 Colleges of Education, 39 Polytechnics and 81 Universities with more UBE schools and mass migration of people into the various schools (JAMB, 2007). By implication, 100 percent of 6 to 12 years old Nigerian children should be in the primary schools. With the UBE being free and compulsory, the trend will be greater and surely increase. Mass literacy, adult, special and

non-formal education are the components of the Universal Basic Education (UBE). This is so because literacy is the bedrock and the solid foundation on which the totality of education is built. Literacy is linked with development world over. Countries with very high rate of development also have a matching high literacy rate.

It is then obvious that with the present UBE programme, illiteracy which has been identified as a characteristic of poverty should be eradicated from the Nigerian society. Basic Education aims at equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable them to live meaningful and fulfilled lives, contribute to the development of the society and discharge their civic obligations. The UBE programme is made up of six years primary, three years junior secondary, nomadic education for school age pastoral nomads and migrants fishermen, and non-formal education for out of school children, youths and illiterate adults. The inclusion of the above calibre of people as a target group in the programme shows that UBE has the potentials of combating poverty in the society through its mass literacy system.

The UBE has now unlike before focused on non-formal education as a useful way of solving the problem of illiteracy thereby combating poverty. Non-formal education according to Combs (1995) is mostly assortment of organized education activities operating outside the regular structure and routines of the formal system aimed at serving a great variety of the learning needs of different sub-groups in the population, both young and old and it is a substitute for formal school.

The UBE programme intends to equip its recipients with knowledge, attitudes and skills through non-formal education in the areas of craft making, weaving and textile, fashion designing, typing, computer literacy/operation, agriculture, brick laying, carpentry, carving, fish pond/fishing, catering, sculptor, cobbler, mechanic, poultry, piggery, animal husbandry etc. This knowledge in skills will enable the recipients solve their daily life problems, hence alleviating poverty in the nation.

Management and Implementation of the UBE Scheme

The UBE scheme suffers from a number of setbacks, including dearth of qualified teachers. As pointed out by Nwadiani (1999), schools in Nigeria are fast decaying. The rot in the system ranges from shortage of teaching and learning resources to lack of effective leadership and proper motivation of teachers. The teachers become unhappy, frustrated and uninspired (Kanu, 1997). The available teachers cannot perform miracles if they are not provided with the tools to successfully implement the education programme (Dike, 2000).

Section 71(3) of the UBE Act, 2004 specifically provides that the administration and disbursement of funds shall be through the State Universal Basic Education Board. This provision excludes the Federal and State Ministries of Finance and Education in the disbursement of funds and general management of the programme. It is wise that government officials and politicians will be excluded in the overall management of and disbursement of funds for the implementation of the UBE with the fervent hope that the people in the Commission, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) and Local Education Authorities (LEA) who are expected to be professionals will be qualified and committed enough. But the reverse seems to be the case. The members of the Commission, Boards and Authorities are appointed by political authorities and this opens up the membership to political hangers-on, jobbers and sycophants who may not be as qualified as the UBE Act and Laws prescribe. This is already and obviously happening at the federal and state levels. The Board membership is given up to the vagaries of political expediency.

It is crystal clear that the management of basic education will determine the extent to which poverty syndrome will be curtailed or reduced in Nigeria. Since basic education is the springboard for higher educational attainment, it is necessary that its management be properly handled. It is on the above background that this paper examined the management situation of basic education for poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of Study

The study was carried out to determine the relationship between basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between the management of UBE and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Determine the relationship between the implementation of UBE and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study.

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the management of basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.
 Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the implementation of basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for this study. This is because the researcher had to gather information regarding the variables under study in order to test the hypotheses.

Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of staff of Universal Basic Education Board and Junior Secondary School Teachers in Akwa Ibom State. This stood at 235 and 3265 respectively, totaling 3500.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample stood at 525 respondents: 85 SUBEB staff and 440 junior secondary school teachers, representing 15% of the study population. The stratified sampling technique was used in drawing out the sample based on the three Senatorial Districts of the state.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire tagged "Basic Education and Poverty Alleviation (BEPA) Questionnaire" was developed by the researcher and used in collecting data for the study. The instrument was duly validated using the face and content validation methods and pilot tested to determine its reliability using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. This stood at 0.698.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected were analyzed using the independent t-test.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the management of basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1: Independent t-test Analysis of Basic Education Management and Poverty Alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

Groups	N	Score	X	SD	t
SUBEB Staff	85	1556	11.29	1.24	0.99*
JSS Teachers	440	4841	9.29	1.14	

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 523; critical t-value = 1.96

Table 1 presents the calculated t-value as 0.99. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level with 523 degrees of freedom. The obtained t-value of 0.99 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. The implication is that the management of UBE does not enhance poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the implementation of basic education and poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Independent t-test Analysis of Basic Education Implementation and Poverty Alleviation in Akwa Ibom State

Groups	N	Score	X	SD	t
SUBEB Staff	85	1498	9.33	1.01	0.81*
JSS Teachers	440	3252	10.01	1.12	

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level; $df = 523$; critical t-value = 1.96

Table 2 presents the calculated t-value as 0.81. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level with 523 degrees of freedom. The obtained t-value of 0.81 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. The implication is that the state of UBE implementation does not enhance poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

In testing hypothesis one, no significant difference of basic education management on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State was established. The implication is that the manner in which the Universal Basic Education is managed does not enhance poverty alleviation in the state and nation generally. Contrary to the provisions of section 71(3) of the UBE Act of 2004, the government, both at the federal and state levels still interfere with the administration and disbursement of funds for the programme. Politics has been allowed to meddle in the affairs of UBE Commission and Boards both at state and federal levels. Besides, appointments made into the Commissions and Boards are highly politicized. Merit and qualification are overtaken by political patronage. This does not allow for

efficiency in the management and day-to-day running of the Boards, as some of the appointees lack the necessary experience and qualifications to manage the Boards. The Board's membership is given up to the vagaries of political expediency. The result of this is financial mismanagement and misappropriation, delays in the release of funds for projects implementation, indebtedness to teachers and lack of the necessary materials to work with. This hinders the realization of goals and objectives of the programme as a poverty alleviation strategy (NERDC, 2007).

Data analysis in hypothesis two also revealed no significant difference of UBE implementation on poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. The implication is that the level of implementation of the UBE programme in Akwa Ibom does not enhance poverty alleviation. This finding is supported by the statistics on poverty incidence released by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 2007). The statistics shows that Akwa Ibom State poverty index increased from 32.0 to 67.7 percent between 2002 and 2006. This is contrary to the United Nations, IMF and World Bank's international commitment to halve global poverty by 2015 in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As observed by Dike (2000) the implementation of the UBE programme suffers many setbacks in most states of the federation, ranging from dearth of qualified teachers to poor state of infrastructural and instructional facilities. This impedes effective implementation of the programme and negates its poverty alleviation strategy.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that the UBE programme, as presently managed, does not enhance poverty alleviation in Akwa Ibom State. The programme suffers from poor implementation, ranging from dearth of qualified teachers to inadequate infrastructural and instructional facilities. Hence, the level of implementation cannot enhance poverty alleviation in the State and nation generally.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made to enhance the realization of the poverty alleviation objectives aspect of the UBE programme.

1. The provisions of section 71(3) of the UBE Act (2004) concerning the administration and management of funds should be strictly adhered to for a smooth management of the scheme.
2. The UBE programme, as an educational programme, should not be politicized. It should be detached from much political influence

as experience and commitment are required to make the programme succeed. The Boards membership should be strictly on merit based on qualification, experience and performance and not on political godfatherism or a means of settling political sores.

3. Delays should be avoided as much as possible in the disbursement of funds meant for the programme.
4. Adequate monitoring mechanism should be put in place and made functional to check misappropriation of funds and mismanagement of other resources.
5. Teachers should be trained in sufficient number, deployed and motivated for effective implementation of the programme.
6. For the programme to realize its poverty alleviation strategy, the enabling law should be duly followed, and progress continuously evaluated to provide for remedial measures when necessary.
7. The UBEC should as a matter of urgency set up monitoring units in each of the States to physically inspect and certify the claims of the States before they can be allowed to access more intervention funds. Sanctions should also be placed on erring States. Indeed, the FG should think about setting in motion a mechanism for effective implementation and quality assurance if the programme is to be uniformly implemented nation-wide and to achieve its own stated objectives.

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