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Journal of Research in Educational Sciences

The Journal is designed to promote scholars' thought in the field of education with the clear mission to provide an interdisciplinary forum for discussion and debate about education's most vital issues. We intend to publish papers that contribute to the expanding boundaries of knowledge in education and focus on research, theory, current issues and applied practice in this area.

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Assessment of National Policy on Education and its Implication for Poverty Eradication in Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper examines the implications of education policy in the eradication of poverty. The objectives of this study amongst others are (i) to have an in depth understanding of the concept of poverty and to determine its extent in Nigeria (ii) to assess the National policy on education in relation to the nation's philosophy and (iii) to ascertain their relevance for poverty eradication. Secondary sources were used to collect data; while the human resource capital and basic needs theories were adopted to X-ray the study.

The study reveals that every responsible and responsive government has the challenge to make life better and more meaningful for its citizenry. It established a strong relationship between education and development and stressed that the topmost aim of social policies such as education, should be used to develop human beings who are capable of attacking poverty, through its provision of high skilled manpower, enhancement of income levels of individuals, thereby eradicating or at least reducing poverty level of the Nation. It also shows that limited funding in the education sector is militating against the development of education.

The study concludes that education is a Sine qua non for poverty eradication and recommends that poverty eradication will be a mirage in Nigeria if there is no good governance to provide adequate funding for qualitative and quantitative infrastructure for the education sector.

Keywords: national policy, education, poverty, poverty eradication, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

All over the World, a responsive and responsible government has the challenge to make life better and more meaningful for the citizenry, if it is to continue to have relevance in the eyes of the people. Governments usually respond to such challenges through policies.

One major problem facing the World in general and the third world countries in particular today, is the eradication of poverty which every government including the government of the developing countries, have built in as part of its developmental programme.

Poverty is a social problem in which the victim is faced with cultural, social, political, economic and environmental deprivations. It is a state of involuntary deprivation to which nations can be subjected to. Various scholars such as Okoye and Owyukwu¹; Oyeranti and Olayiwole;² have pointed out that there are reinforcing vicious circles that keep families, regions, and countries poor and unable to contribute to National growth. The World Development Report³ defines poverty as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. This assertion is supported by Aluko⁴ when he refers to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs which means that there is an inadequate level of consumption, which

gives rise to insufficient food, clothing, shelter and lack of certain capabilities as well as being able to participate with dignity in the society. This explanation, however, failed to provide the graphic picture of those who are poor, how to change their conditions and what to do.

Poverty exists in the World over, but in Less Developed Countries (LDC's), poverty level has been on the increase since the 1990s. Research findings have shown that while efforts to reverse trends in Asia and South America have had some success, poverty situation has worsened in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, since the late 1980s poverty situation according to Dreze *et al.*⁵ "can be best described as inflammable." Namani⁶ amplifies this point in his assertion that "poverty in Nigeria has been rising steadily or exponentially."

Aware of the grave consequences of poverty, successive Nigerian governments, have designed, implemented and reformed numerous policies in a bid to tackle the scourge. However, every effort towards this direction has not yielded the expected results. Some believe that bad governance, corruption, low productivity, unemployment, debt burden and conflicts are associated to failures of poverty eradication programmes, others attribute the high level of poverty to macro-economic distortion, globalization, high population growth rate, while some others posit that poor policies on human resource development are responsible for prevalent level of poverty.

Human resource development involves investing in peoples' education, health and nutrition. Investing in education from the perspective of this study is an important investment in human resource development.

In human history, more than ever before, education has again been indisputably recognized as the bedrock and catalyst of any meaningful development. This is because education generally plays a critical role in the life of human beings. As an agent of change, education presents a solid vehicle for the transformation and empowerment of individuals and societies. Education is thus, a sine qua non for development. British Department and International Development (DFID) United States Agency for International Development (USAID) World Bank, UNICEF, and other development agencies, see education as a tool that should be used to half poverty by the year 2015. This perhaps explains why DFID, USAID, World Bank and UNICEF are major development partners working in Basic education in Nigeria⁷. The wealth or poverty of nations thus, depends on the quality of education received as no nation can develop above the educational level and competence of her citizenry. This is also supported by Guilli's⁸ assertion that:

"...those with a repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to lifetimes of unprecedented economic fulfillment. But in the coming decades, the poorly educated, will face little better than dreary prospects of lives of quiet desperation."

It is generally believed that acute poverty can be reduced if not eradicated through education policy measures. This is the target of this paper. The study answers the following fundamental questions concerning the national policy and its implications on poverty Eradication:

1. What is Poverty?
2. Is sustainable development through education, a way out for poverty eradication?
3. Are the educational policy reforms conceived with a view to re-position education to meet the need of national development?
4. To what extent has National Policy on education measures adopted by government, enhanced development in Nigeria?

From these questions, it follows that our objectives for this study are:

- To have an in-depth understanding of the concept of poverty and to determine its extent in Nigeria.
- To review and assess the education policy measures of successive Nigerian government.
- To ascertain their relevance and implications for poverty eradication.
- To propose other policy options and the need to re-direct policy towards poverty eradication.

In the course of this study, secondary data were used. Materials were sourced from books, journals and articles from libraries of Institutions and Universities. The internet was also a very useful e-books/journals source of data collection.

The scope of this work was limited to the National policy on Education (NPE) and its relevance to poverty eradication with particular reference to the overall philosophy of Nigeria and the five main national goals of Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1. The Concept of Poverty

A search through relevant literature easily reveals that there is no general consensus on any definition of poverty. This is because, poverty affects many aspects of the human condition, including physical, moral and psychological, and hence a universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive. Poverty can however be located within the context of contradiction between the resources available to an individual, household or a region, and the demand and condition of his/her environment. Poverty is a plague that dehumanizes the victim. It is a dreaded condition of absence of capacity to maintain at least basic level of decent living, and also denies the individuals the right to exercise their full potential; because of its complex and multidimensional nature, poverty goes beyond condition of lack of resources. It extends to social inequality, insecurity, illiteracy, poor health, restricted or total lack of socio-economic opportunities for personal growth and self-realization.

Accordingly Garuba, Onibokun and Kumuyi⁹, made the point when they defined poverty as "a way of life characterized by low calorie intake, inaccessibility to adequate health facilities, low quality education, inaccessibility to various housing and societal facilities.

Ravallion and Bidani¹⁰ on their part, see poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption need. This in Aluko's¹¹ view is equivalent to inadequate level of consumption of food, clothing and shelter, while Sen¹² perceives poverty as "the lack of certain capabilities such as being able to participate with dignity in society. The World Development Report¹³ further defines poverty as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. Other indices used to measure poverty by the United Nations (UN) are indices as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, primary school enrolment ratios, and number of persons per physician. Poverty is one of the main symptoms or manifestations of underdevelopment and usually has adverse effects for the people, national economies, and the political and social development of the affected countries. From the point of view of human development, poverty is not simply about lack of material wealth and resources. It is fundamentally about a lack of choice in meeting basic needs as well as in dealing with the forces that shape our quality of life.

According to Shaffer¹⁴ the concept of poverty has undergone four changes over the past decade. First, there has been a shift from a physiological model of deprivation to a social model of deprivation.

The social model is about incorporating issues of political and economic rights and social justice into the anti-poverty programmatic framework. Second, there has been renewed emphasis placed on the concept of vulnerability and its relationship to poverty. Third, the concept of inequality and its relationship to poverty has re-emerged as a central concern. Fourth, the idea that poverty should be conceptualized as the violation of basic human rights has been painstakingly argued by UN system agencies.

The poor do not have much choice over many things that affect them, ranging from food, shelter, health and safety, the more complex needs that require them to be active participants in the economic system, and members of civil society. This includes; employment, purchasing power, civic rights etc. This is what equates poverty to subsistence and powerless existence, yet the poor, like all others in society, have much to offer in terms of human potentials. They have the potential capacity to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of their communities and the nation at large¹⁵.

From the various definitions of poverty above, poverty refers to a serious inadequacy of economic condition, a situation of individual, group or regional lack or deprivation of what are considered the necessities for acceptable living standards or a state of not having access to conducive environment, facilities, and opportunities for decent living standards.

2.2. Education

Education is a broad concept. Its definition varies from one individual to another, but they all revolve around one major concept and that is "change from one situation to another." According to Anyanwu¹⁶ education is "any process by which an individual gain knowledge to attain the development of his potential and their maximum activation when necessary according to the right reason and to achieve his perfect self-fulfillment." This according to him, is concerned with the cultivation of the whole person", including his intellectual, affective character and psychomotor for development. Nwagu¹⁷ on his part defines education as "the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills, attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable and at times hostile and destructive elements and force of man and nature." United Nations for Educational, scientific and cultural organizations (UNESCO¹⁸) sees education as bringing forth 'men' capable of vivid imagination of the need of their societies, qualified to organize production factors, administer and govern in accordance with rules of a modern state." Furthermore Akintola¹⁹ perceives education as a basic force for the socio-economic and political transformation of society". In this regard, education has been described as something that is more than schooling. The definitions put forward, depict education as a product that is an instrument to improve the society, which brings a return in the future²⁰.

3. Theoretical Framework

Two major theories are used to properly x-ray the study under review. They are the human resource capital theory and the basic needs theory.

The human resource capital theory emphasizes that education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of their cognitive skills and that people invest in education to increase their stock in human capital. Human resource development proponents; Schultz²¹, Sakamota and Power²², and Psacharopoulos and Woodhall²³, based their works on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the quality of a population.

They therefore see human capital as the stock of economically productive human capabilities, which can be formed by combining innate abilities with investments in human beings. Human resource development theorists have widely established that basic literacy enhances the productivity of workers in low-skill occupations. They further stated that an instrument that demand logical or analytical reasoning, or provides technical and specialized knowledge increases the marginal productivity of workers in higher skill or professional positions. Education or on the job training, health and nutrition increase future productive capacity at the expense of current consumption.

Lucas²⁴ in his endogenous growth model, attempted to explicitly demonstrate that education can expedite the process of growth when he used education as the critical variable that generates technical progress in an economy. He showed that education and creation of human capital are responsible for both the differences in overall levels of technology that can be observed from the real world data. Denison²⁵ calculated that for a period of 1920-1982, over a quarter of the average annual rate of increase of 1.48 per cent in United States, national output per employed person was due mainly to improvements in the level of education of the work force.

In Babolola's²⁶ estimation, "the publication of the World Bank's East Asian *Miracle Report* revealed that the spectacular economic success in East Asia during the 1970s and 1980s was largely attributed to investment in education and human capital". This was notable in the economies of Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan. The study found that improvement in education was a very powerful explanatory variable for East-Asian economic growth which invariably reduced poverty.

Investment in human resource development has been a source of growth and eradication of poverty in Developed Countries (DCs). On the other hand, the negligible amount of human investment in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) has done little to extend the capacity of the people to meet the challenges of accelerated development. Thus, an improvement in the quality of the human factor is essential as investment in the physical resources. Although investment in material capital could directly achieve some lessening of the economic backwardness of human resources, the direct and more decisive means could be through investment in human beings, since the underlying theory of public investment expenditure aims at raising the welfare position of the citizenry. Nigeria policy on education must be such that will invest meaningfully in human resource development to avoid the risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive globalized world.

Basic needs theory identifies the needs of the poor and uses heterogeneous policies and programmes to meet perceived basic needs that would enable the poor to live a decent life. These basic needs include all or some of such basic socio-economic, needs necessities, as food and nutrition, health care, education, shelter, clothing, transportation and employment. According to the renowned psychologist, Abraham Maslow, and the conflict scholar John Burton, these essentials go beyond just food, water, and shelter. They include both physical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all those things humans are innately driven to attain²⁷. Maslow's, human needs are hierarchical in nature, which starts with the above stated basic needs; these are followed by the need for safety and security, belongingness/love, self-esteem, and finally personal fulfillment.

However, Burton^{28,29} and other needs theorists, further contend that needs do not have a hierarchical order. Rather, needs are sought simultaneously in an intense and relentless manner³⁰. Generally, the basic needs theory should include an economic component to promote broad based

economic growth and create employment and income generating opportunities for both poor and non-poor, social services components, and a safety-net component³¹.

4. Extent of Poverty in Nigeria

People in Nigeria, as in other Sub-Saharan African (SSA) and Southern Asian Countries, remain the poorest in the World. In 1992, between 45 and 50 per cent of the approximately 525 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, were estimated to be living below poverty line of US \$ 1. The World Bank³² observed that the depth of poverty in SSA is typically higher than elsewhere in the world. Poverty is still pervasive in Nigeria. Nigeria is blessed with mineral resources and very rich in crude oil, it is the seventh largest exporter of oil in the world and the largest in Africa³³, yet the citizens are hungry and poor in the midst of plenty. The UNDP³⁴ defined human development as:

A process of enlarging people's choices; Enlarging people's choices is achieved by expanding human capabilities and functioning. At all levels of development, the three essential capabilities for human development are for people to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, and to have decent standard of living. If these basic capabilities are not achieved, many choices are simply not available and many opportunities remain inaccessible. But the realm of human development goes further; essential areas of choice, highly valued by people, range from political, economic and social opportunities to being creative and productive, to enjoying self-respect, empowerment and a sense of belonging to the community.'

For every individual, the most important indices of human development remain the ability to lead long and healthy lives; possession of the kind of knowledge that is required to lead a happy and productive life, and having access to resources that will enable a decent standard of living.

The UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI) re-emphasized that people and their lives should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, instead of other economic growth measures. In its study where it classified Nigeria as 141st poorest nation on human development index, the report states further that the country is considered one of the 20th poorest countries in the world with 70 per cent of the population classified as poor and 54.4 per cent in absolute poverty level³⁵. Statistical data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS³⁶) indicate that at independence in 1960, the poverty level in the country was put at 15 per cent and by 1980 it had reached 28.1 per cent. In 1985 the poverty level was placed at 46.3 per cent but dropped to 42.7 per cent in 1992 perhaps because of the elections slated for 1993.

Nonetheless, with the end of the election process by the military government, the poverty level assumed its progressive growth level as it rose to 43.6 per cent in 1995. A year later, about 65 per cent of the population was below poverty line with 6.1 million Nigerians living below poverty line of US \$ 1. This corroborates the UNDP ^{37,38}, reports which added that poverty has been on the increase in Nigeria since the 1980s. According to Ekpu³⁹, in the 1999 and 2000 UN Report, Nigeria had further degenerated to 87 per cent of the population living below poverty line and rated 154 on the world's marginal poverty index out of 172 countries. The report further states that Nigeria is already hanging precariously with a greater percentage of its population living on less than 1 USD per day without any sign of change.

The above report has offered significant insights into the nature and depth of poverty in Nigeria. Other available statistics shows that instead of advancing, Nigeria has lately degenerated into one of the poorest countries of the world, as more and more people are getting poorer by the day.

Table 1 Poverty level in Nigeria 1980-1996, 2000/2005

Year	Estimated population million	Population in poverty (million)	Poverty level %
1980	65	17.7	27.2
1985	75	34.7	46.3
1992	91.5	39.2	42.9
1996	102.3	67.1	65.6
2000	115	80.5	70.0
2005	134	72.9	54.4

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, 2001 and Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report and statement of accounts for the years ended 31 Dec 2001/2005.

In another report Evbuomwan⁴⁰, also found that poverty is still pervasive in Nigeria. While Omotola⁴¹ has added that about 70% of the population now lives in abject poverty. Similarly, Kalu ⁴² reported that between 2004 and 2010, Nigeria's poverty rate had moved from 54.4 per cent to 69 per cent involving 112,518,507 Nigerians, adding that although the country's Gross Domestic Growth (GDP) had grown since then, it had little impact on the poverty situation. Applying the United Nations' definition of a poor person in dollar terms, the Statistician-General Dr. Kalu further disclosed that 51.6 per cent of Nigerians were living below US\$1 per day in 2004 but this increased to 61.2 per cent in 2010. This he said remains a paradox. Despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year," he insisted. This corroborates with UN⁴³. Ekpo⁴⁴ also described Nigeria's growth rate of 7.8 per cent as "jobless growth and paper growth" while stressing that rising economic growth is inconsistent with rising poverty and rising unemployment.

5. Assessment of National Policy on Education

A nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals, which can be achieved using education as a tool⁴⁵.

Since 1960, the education sub-sector in Nigeria has undergone series of changes and it is still undergoing changes according to new demands and aspirations of the society. Such changes usually come in forms of policies, edicts or pronouncements, which are either promulgated or enacted from time to time. Education policies in Nigeria have been formed by a number of influences. These include; colonial influence, military rule influence and then the impact of independence as well as a new constitution.

The educational policies of colonial Nigerian reflected the needs of the colonial government who did not want the emancipation of the colonized. Its policy was that of economic exploitation of the resources of the colonies through the sale of manufactured goods to the colonized, the establishment of political authority and the exposure of the natives to the culture of the ruling power. The British government's education was basically initiated by the missionaries whose prime motive was to proselytize the people, and produce lay readers, catechists, teachers and personnel needed for further evangelistic activities. The British Government education policies in Nigeria were thus essentially that of producing literates and clerical staff who would help in keeping the colony in a subordinate position for maximum exploitation of the resources of the colony. In other words, the education received from the

colonialists made Nigerians cultural slaves of the western world as it alienated the educated from their roots, and brought about lopsided social political and educational development which resulted into the sharp distinction between the Northern and the southern areas of the country. The point being stressed here is that education policy was structured to achieve the selfish aims of the colonialists, a case of "he, who pays the piper, dictates the tune".

On attainment of independence, the Nigerian government turned its educational policies towards the achievement of its political goals and on the top of the political goals of the national needs, was the desire to have adequate manpower to develop the nation technologically. One of the bold reforms the Federal government took then to correct the anomalies and put the state of affairs of education in the right perspective, was to embark upon the first ever nationwide Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE) in 1976. To this end, large scale educational expansion at all levels took place in the country, during the succeeding years of independence.

The Universal Primary Education Scheme of 1976 (though prematurely truncated), was aimed at bringing education to all and sundry and close up the educational gap. This was also to justify government's objective of building an egalitarian society where everybody will have equal opportunities. In 1977 a new National Policy on Education (NPE) (revised in 1981), commonly referred to as the 6-3-3-4, was published in order to have a uniform standard of education across the nation. This policy has been put into use since 1982. The main objectives of the second National Development Plan (1970-74) which also constituted the broad philosophy of the nation's education was as stated in the national policy on education (1981). At this point, it has become pertinent to take a closer look at the philosophy and objectives behind the policies that guided government in adopting this policy as "an instrument par excellence for effecting national development". They include:

- A free and democratic society;
- A just and egalitarian society;
- A United, strong and self-reliant nation;
- A great and dynamic economy and
- A land that is bright and full of opportunities for all citizens.

While the objectives of education are:

- The inculcation of National consciousness and National Unity.
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Unity and
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world, around us. It also includes the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society. The policy went further to state that government's ultimate aim was to make education free at all levels, while the financing should be a joint responsibility of the Federal, State and Local Governments⁴⁶. The deductions that could be made from the above overview are noteworthy, when we consider that education was designed as a priority of and should be funded by the government at all levels; for accelerated development goals. This implies that formal education by design should be a public good. There has not been any change in this policy as at the time of this study. As good as these policies are

experience has shown that education practices are not meeting these goals. One could easily say then, that the above policy statements are good examples of policies which have made little impact upon what actually goes on in practice. This among other factors is due to inadequate funding.

Inadequate funding has for a long time, been a major factor militating against the implementation of the laudable objectives of the NPE. The budget allocation to education sub-sector in Nigeria is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Federal Government Budget on Education. 1996-2010 (N billion)

Year	Allocation (billion)	Percentage
1996	15.3	12.32
1997	21.8	11.59
1998	26.7	10.27
1999	23.0	11.2
2000	44.2	8.3
2001	39.9	7.0
2002	100.2	5.1
2003	64.8	11.8
2004	72.2	7.8
2005	92.6	8.3
2006	166.6	8.7
2007	137.5	6.1
2008	210.0	13.0
2009	183.4	7.2
2010	249.1	6.4

Source: Federal Ministry of Education

From the above table, one can infer that the NPE was grossly inadequately funded at the federal government level. The allocation to the sector over the years shows that the federal government allocation is below UNESCO's threshold of 26%. This is why, necessary physical infrastructures and instructional materials needed to achieve the technological goals that will make them self-reliant, could not be made available. *Furthermore* the series of financial and management problems, (a base of other studies) led to low performances on the part of teachers who were owed for several months. Correlating the above analyses, and assertion, Omorede⁴⁷ in a research work, discovered that other sources of funding which would have brought more money to the funding of the schools, were grossly under-utilized, perhaps due to government's efforts in trying to fund all aspects of education to justify its stand on making education a basic right of every Nigerian child, as stipulated by the NPE⁴⁸. The research further revealed that despite the fact that teachers' salaries were now paid two weeks into the new month, there was hardly any money left to run the day to day administration of the schools after salaries were paid.

Another important factor for ineffective implementation of the NPE was that of manpower capacity which was neither sufficient nor adequate, as personnel, has not been sufficiently trained for the use of the new technology. Other factors included, pupils/teachers ratio, low enrolment of pupils particularly the girls, were all hindrances to the successful implementation of the programme. There is also no opportunity for transition from school to work as provided for by the NPE.

6. Education and Development

Education has been identified as a very essential tool for individual and national development. Abolade⁴⁹ describes education as an invaluable instrument of political, social, economic, scientific and technological development; no wonder Itejere⁵⁰ in his contention argues that a nation cannot develop beyond its educational status. This is based on the fact that skill and instruction for national building are imparted through education to individuals in a given society. It is in this direction that education is seen as both a process and a product; on the one hand, economists say education is both a consumer and a capital good because it offers to a consumer and also serves as an input into the production of other goods and services. As a capital good, it is used to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. The focus on education as a capital good relates to the concept of human resource development which emphasized that the development of skills is equally an important factor in production as are finance, natural resources, and physical equipment. The process of development requires knowledge and skill and education also develops the needed knowledge and skills. It is obvious that education contributes to the development of any country by developing her human resources. A large number of uneducated citizens have therefore been considered by the proponents of human resource development theories, as one of the reasons for underdevelopment and poverty of Nations. It is against this back drop argued Ngutsav⁵¹ that scholars have come to believe that one of the important break-through in economics after world War 11 was the establishment of a very close correlation between education and training on the one hand and production capacity, income and development on the other. Modern economic history suggests that industrial revolution started in Britain in the 18th century because they had the highest literacy rate in the World. It was on that basis that Cameron ⁵² postulated the famous axiom that "knowledge begets wealth and ignorance begets poverty".

Most economists generally subscribe to the argument that it is the human resource of a nation, not its physical capital or its natural resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development This view is strongly expressed by Harbison ⁵³ as follows:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations, capital and natural resources are passive factors, of production; human beings are the creative agents, who accumulate, exploit natural resources, build social economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else."

According to Adam Smith⁵⁴ government activities should support education on the grounds that education makes people (including the labor force), more sophisticated and progressive, which he deemed essential for the smooth functioning of an economy.

Education empowers individuals and helps them to become proactive, gain control over their lives and broadens the range of available options. Education is a basic human right, and it is closely linked to virtually all dimensions of development, (economic, social and human). It is also a key factor to

improving the quality of governance that has a significant impact on national income. It follows therefore that a more educationally backward nation will only be a less developed one, as it would not have "developed people" to sustain its efforts. It is in line with this belief that expanding education at all levels promote economic growth and development that Nigeria has been investing in this sector since independence. It is however, only a substantial investment in this sector that can promote and achieve education for poverty eradication.

7. Breaking the Poverty Cycle through Education

The conquest of poverty has become the overarching goal of the United Nations and the right perspective has increasingly been shown in the UN works to be quality education. Education as has exhaustibly been viewed on its developmental advantages can be said to be an inalienable human right, guaranteed under the convention of rights of the child among other instruments. Basic Education for all is vital to society, because it produces people who can contribute to the economic, social, and political development that is required to eradicate poverty. It has been stressed in this work that poverty is not simply about lack of material wealth and resources. It is fundamentally about a lack of choice in meeting basic needs such as employment, purchasing power, civic right etc. it is through education that people realize their potentials to contribute maximally to production, wealth creation, good governance and execution of various roles, no wonder UNESCO⁵⁵ sees education as "...bringing forth men capable of vivid imagination of the need of their societies, qualified to organize, ...administer and govern...." It is also through education that people are able to benefit from the distribution of wealth in the economy, have a political voice, and access social goods and services to enhance their living standards. The United Nations handbook for the world summit for social development 1995 stressed that;

"The most permanent and deepest aim of social policies is to develop and invest in human beings themselves. This is the only way to break the vicious circle of poverty and attack the underlying factors which cause it to be transmitted from generation to generation"⁵⁶.

Economists have for a very long time emphasized that education has a significant role to play in poverty reduction in various ways. A positive link between an income-based poverty concept and education, they say, can be found in the process of economic growth as education can directly reduce poverty through the contribution that production enhancement makes to economic development and indirectly through a healthy work force, and so, helps to alleviate poverty through its positive spill-over effects on society. This is attested to by the World Bank in Ojo and Bamidele⁵⁷, when it states that "raising educational levels mean scientific knowledge to promote their own and family health, the skill is the limit for the contribution it can make to economic progresses. Ojo further opines that of all contributing factors to economic development, human resources stand out as the major factor that determines the manner in which all other factors should be combined to spur developmental process.

The necessity and knowledge that education provides, is according to Ngutsav⁵⁸ captured by Drucker who identified the source of wealth as something specifically human. According to him "if we apply knowledge to tasks that are new and different, we call it innovations". Education is the major mechanism for building and advancing people's knowledge, skills, attitudes etc, with which they are prepared for the world of work and this makes it a critical link between development and poverty eradication. In other words, for individual and families, education is a sound economic investment which raises not only the quality of life and improves health, but also increases productivity in market and non-

market activities, and hence increases individual access to paid employment as well as facilitates social and political participations. To Todaro⁵⁹ one of the most important and extensively measured contributions of education to economic development is its positive effect on national output. In this regard, investment in human resources as typified by education has been found to be responsible for growth of developed countries.

The implication for policy on education cannot, therefore be over emphasized. Policy must be such that the funding of education above all things must be paramount in the minds of policy makers.

8. Implications of National Policy on Education (NPE) on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria

Lack of involvement of beneficiaries of education policies in the formation and implementation of education policies had resulted in unsuccessful implementation of the NPE programmes. It is generally expected that the dividends of democratization especially as we celebrate the 52nd independence anniversary should trickle-down to all sector of the economy. Democracy is looked upon to reform the National education system with a view to meet current challenges in a globalized world, such as making policy responsive to the realities of our needs within the socio-economic and political environment of the nation.

World Bank in a study on educational system in Nigeria found that in 1998, education budget was equivalent to 2.3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to 14.2 per cent of the total expenditures of the three tiers of government. The report further found that on the average for 19 Sub-Saharan African countries in the mid-1990s, education expenditures were equal to 4.7 per cent of GDP and 19.6 per cent of government total expenditure⁶⁰. This severe poor budgetary situation will certainly not encourage the development of the use of modern technology. Large sum of fund is required to procure modern facilities for science and technology in the education sector.

These facilities are either never completed or they are abandoned for lack of fund. Policy has to meet this challenge to avoid the emergence of rising frustration with the budgetary process in the country. The importance of budgetary allocation to the education system cannot be overstressed considering the position of this paper. Most countries commit sizeable proportions of their resources to education provision and development in believing that rapid quantitative and qualitative expansion of educational opportunities holds the basic key to national development. Investment in education leads to the accumulation of human capitals, which is the key to sustained economic growth and development. Nigeria should do the same so as to allow education contribute maximally to the strengthening of the institutions of civil society and national capacity building which will invariably eradicate poverty.

Women and children are more likely to be poor, malnourished, and likely to be the ones to receive medical services, clean water, sanitation, and other benefits. Education for women has been particularly emphasized, for reducing overall poverty. Educating women for instance, has the potential of a positive effect on fertility, infant mortality, nutrition and enrolment rates of the next generation (Keeping children in School meanwhile is a well-recognized strategy for reducing child labor). It is no surprise then to state that empowerment of women through the promotion of gender equality and eliminating gender disparities in primary, secondary and tertiary schools is a Key to poverty eradication⁶¹.

While the second of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) "Universal primary education," is considered vital for reduction of poverty, it is also important to note that, until recently, the conventional wisdom had been to highlight the role of higher education as a driver of economic growth

in developed countries, but view it as a luxury good in developing economy. The new emergent view is that far from being a luxury, higher education is essential for poverty eradication in developing economies; the argument being that higher education provides fundamental expertise to all sectors of society and economy. This is why education at all levels, must be a part of any realistic poverty eradication strategy. A recent UN Millennium Project Task Force Report, has emphasized that "science, technology, and innovation have helped to lessen poverty and hunger and drive economic growth in much of South-East Asia". The report suggests that these same factors must be at the fore front therefore of all policies designed to achieve the MDGs. The report further states that "there is no way; the world can succeed in the eradication of poverty if the developing world is not a part of knowledge creation, its dissemination and its utilization to promote innovations⁶². Same conclusions were reached by the World Bank⁶³ in its publication; *Constructing knowledge* and Jeffrey Sachs in his popular book, *The End of Poverty*⁶⁴.

The implication of the new trend of thought for developing nations and Nigeria in particular is to focus on the contributions of human resource development which is the link to achieving the desired goals of development and eventual, poverty eradication.

No doubt, external factors certainly play their part, and globalization, has created intense competition between nations such that widespread commercialization of educational services, has brought about much of "brain-drain" in the sector. Nonetheless, there are skills and training demands for continuing education (Lifelong learning), in order to update knowledge and skills on a regular basis. Nigeria educational policy is still undergoing changes with the hope of meeting the demands of eradicating poverty in the nearest future.

Conclusion

Poverty is an endemic social maladjustment. Education policies have a central role in the fight against poverty, while promoting the need for economic growth especially amongst the poorest citizens. It is difficult to quantify the real contributions of education in terms of (GDP) or other national income aggregates; however from our analyses, it was observed that education has always been considered a powerful instrument for development. It also has the potentials for reducing income inequality, and eradicating poverty through productivity enhancement which of course is a key ingredient for the maintenance of economic growth.

The relationship between education and poverty is quite clear; as the analyses revealed that educated people have higher earning potentials and are better able to improve on the quality of their lives, which means they are less likely to be marginalized within the society and are likely to contribute to the eradication of all forms of poverty not only in their households but the society at large. There is no gain saying, that if the NPE policy measures are properly articulated and implemented, the level of poverty will certainly be reduced if not eradicated.

Recommendations

The move towards poverty eradication through education has continued to be an increasingly important element in economic growth and development. If poverty eradication is to be tackled, it is critical that the following must be considered.

First, government must protect the school system from unnecessary policy fluctuations and instabilities, particularly as they affect funding and financing of education programmes. Inadequate

funding should therefore be avoided while sufficient fund should be made available. As a result, educational facilities should be provided to adequately train skilled medical, scientific, technological and vocational enterprises.

Second, education policies should be people oriented and deep rooted such that it empowers the beneficiaries in line with societal needs. Presently, there appear to be a lacuna between man power needs and education provided, there should therefore be a repackaging and re-positioning of education initiatives to align education with poverty eradication. The activities of all education agencies should constitute an integral part of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).

Third, knowledge from education should be used to empower people to be conscious of their environment and also to maintain a minimum level of existence required for sound social living. There is need to assess manpower policy in terms of how well it develops the human potentials, and for positive utilisation of available manpower, as a result there is need for in-service and on the job training for workers and unemployed youths in Nigeria.

Fourth, advocacy for girls' education particularly in the poorest communities, should be improved upon; this is because educating females offers unique advantages in terms of improving on their quality of life and in the general care of the family and households.

Finally, the provision of basic necessities of life could, promote achievement of goals of education. There should therefore be good condition of service for teachers and regular payment of their salaries, should be enforced to enhance their overall performances. Furthermore, Social amenities such as; good housing, further education, good health facilities, and social mobility should be provided for teachers so as to eliminate all forms of unequal concepts of individual worth on the part of teachers.

Poverty eradication will be a mirage in Nigeria and in the entire Africa if there is no good governance. To have democracy and good policies are not enough but there must be good leaders to implement people oriented education programme that would reduce the sufferings of the people and put a lasting smile on their faces.

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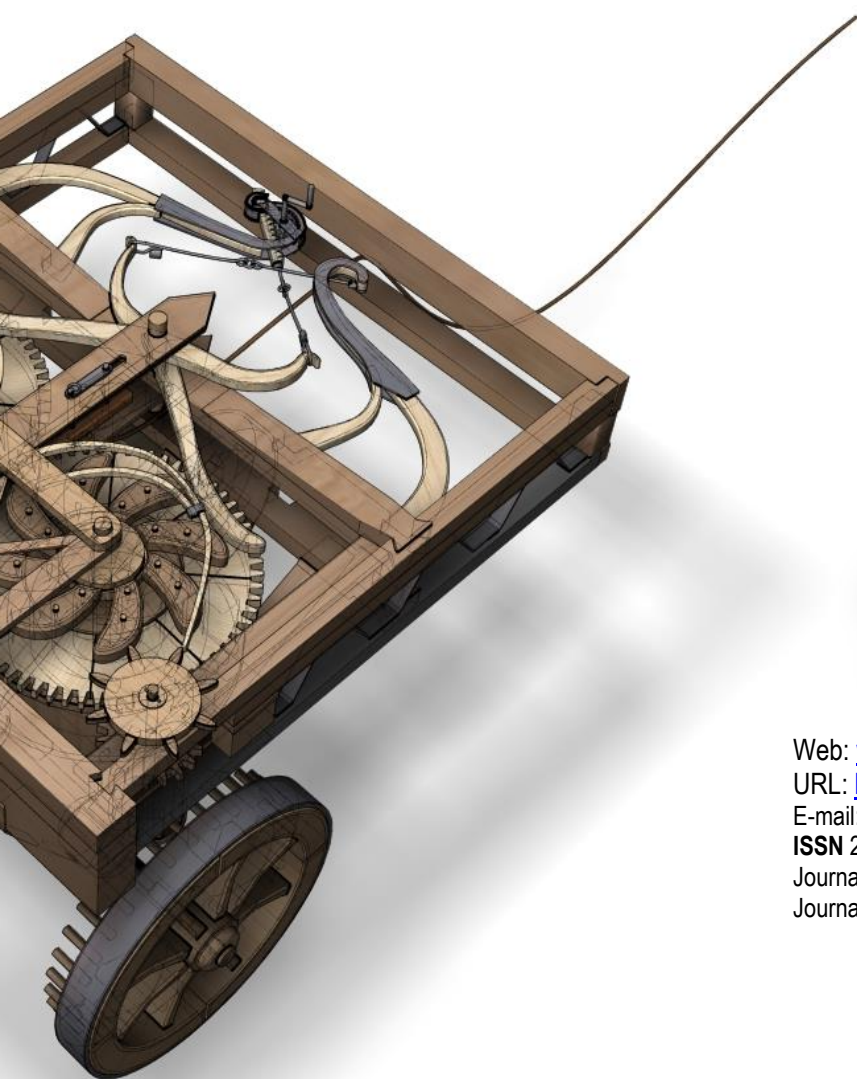
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