

**POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH INVESTMENT IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION
IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the opinions of technical teachers about poverty reduction and strategies to be adopted for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State. A survey research design was used for the study. Sixty technical teachers were sampled from the population of 131 technical teachers in all the seven technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. Poverty Reduction through Investment in Technical Education Questionnaire (PRITEQ) developed by the researchers was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts from University of Uyo and the reliability coefficient of the instrument was .86. Data obtained were analysed using mean and simple percentage. Findings of the study revealed that poverty reduction may occur through investment in technical education. Also, mandatory technical education, siting of industries/skill acquisition centres, adequate funding of poverty reduction programmes and training people for self reliance are the strategies to be adopted for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended among others that government and international agencies should fund technical education programme heavily.

Keywords: *Poverty Reduction, Investment, Technical Education, Nigeria*

Introduction

Poverty reduction is highly regarded as one of the important goals of development. Such development must be about improvement of people's wellbeing; removal of hunger, disease, ignorance and lucrative employment. The major goal of human development must be to end poverty and satisfy the priority needs of all people in a way that can be productivity sustained

over generations. There has been no standard definition of poverty due to the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. Poverty is a plague, a hydra-headed virus that affects both urban and rural areas. According to Sachs (2009) in Omoniyi (2013), poverty can be defined in terms of three distinguishable degrees. These are: extreme poverty, moderate poverty and relative poverty. Extreme poverty means the household cannot meet basic needs for survival. Such people are perpetually hungry, lack access to healthcare; they lack amenities for safe drinking water and sanitation. They cannot afford education for their children and cannot shelter their families. Moderate poverty, on the other hand, generally refers to conditions of life in which basic needs are met, but just barely. Relative poverty is construed as a household income level below a given proportion of average national income.

World Bank (1997) in Omoniyi (2013) has defined poverty in statistical terms of income of one US dollar per person per day, measured at purchasing power parity to determine the number of extreme poor around the world. It is obvious that many people in Akwa Ibom State are living below the poverty level of one US dollar per day. The base line is that they live in poverty in its extreme nature in terms of lack of basic standard of health, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation and other minimum need for survival, well-being and participation in society. Poverty is rampant in Akwa Ibom State and its incidence has been on the increase. This scourge has been found to have more biting effect in the rural areas where the bulk of Akwa Ibom people live. World Bank (1999) reported that distribution of poverty in Nigeria revealed that poverty is highest in rural areas. The number of rural poor is roughly twice that of the urban poor. The depth of poverty is more than double in rural areas which all of them often concentrated in communities without basic services. They are usually cut off from the benefits of development: road, health facilities, portable water supply, electricity, education and safe sanitation.

Within the past three decades, the federal government of Nigeria has made some efforts at alleviating poverty in the nation. These efforts have come in various forms and guises. In 2002, the federal government overturned almost all the extant poverty alleviation programmes. It introduced an assortment of programmes under the title: National Poverty Eradication Programme (Ekpenyong, 2011). These programmes were put in place as a means of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty nationally but most especially in the rural sector. However, these efforts have not yielded the desired results of reducing poverty in Nigeria since the issue was not only economic but also social and political. Besides, many of the programmes were not well designed, formulated and implemented. Some of the poverty reduction programmes failed owing largely to inadequate financing and lack of commitment on the part of the executors of the various programmes. The problems of misunderstanding of the policies made for the people by the policy makers, misplaced priorities, favouritism, and benefit capture which breed contempt for the policies have also not been helpful in the effort to adequately reduce poverty. When policy makers do not know the people they make the policies for, they are bound to either overestimate or underestimate the capabilities of such people and are bound to misplace priorities for the poor.

The introduction of the National Policy on Education was to make education functional as integral part of the nation's effort to accelerate socio-economic growth. Omoniyi (2013) maintained that education provides a foundation for eradicating poverty and fostering economic development. It is the groundwork on which much of economic and social well-being of the citizens is built. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stated that the objectives of technical

education among others are to provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; to provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and to give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. These foregoing objectives are not met by a lot of Nigerians due to poor attention accorded by government to technical education programmes. Well-equipped workshops and materials are not provided in schools and training centres where programmes of vocational and technical education are implemented. Investment in education and training, according to Robert (2000), as cited by Varma (2001) leads to high growth of income, productivity investment and output as well as foster technical progress, innovation, modernization and new capital goods. Investment refers to a commitment of funds to one or more assets that will be held over some future time period (Oyegoke, 2009).

One way of solving this poverty problem is for individuals and organization to direct attention toward investing in education. Investing in education could take different forms, such as massive expansion of educational facilities, vocationalisation of education, adequate funding of education (Ijaiya, 1998). Moreover, investing in vocational training would go a long way toward reducing poverty, in that most children from poor homes prefer functional education which would provide them skills for earning their livelihood. Thus, vocationalisation of education, diversification of courses at the secondary and higher institution levels and setting up of technical education centres most especially in rural areas would help in reducing poverty. Dike (2005) asserted that to reduce the burden of unemployment and poverty on the youths, the government should improve funding in this critical sector and increase access to technical and vocational education for the ever-growing youths. Dike (2005) further stressed that vocational education and training (VET) is an important determinant of income and wealth distribution as it empowers the youths with skills to become productive and highly paid workers. Increase in funding for vocational and technical education and expansion of programs for skill acquisition, employment creation and empowerment would give the youths (the elementary, high school and university dropouts) the needed skills and hope! But, the continued neglect of vocational/technical education could keep the youths in the economic pit they have fallen over the years.

In 2012, Bolaji contended that TVET programme is the most adequate tool for self-reliance, economic survival and advancement of knowledge accumulation. Bolaji (2012) stressed that it is expedient that private establishments, philanthropists, federal, state and local governments invest massively in the promotion of Nigeria's technical and vocational education. Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development (Dike, 2009). Vocational education gives individuals the skills to "live, learn and work as a productive citizen in a global society".

Technical education is investment in the human resources of a country. It is the development of human capital that influences effective and efficient use of other resources to achieve economic development. According to Sagbamah (1997) cited in Balogun (1999), technical education was seen as a way of preparing a workforce for industry, then as a means to improve the formation of human capital and increase productivity and employment, and more

recently as a tool to enhance human development through educational empowerment, and for further human development and sustainable growth. In view of the poverty problem in Akwa Ibom State that this study was undertaken to ascertain the opinions of technical teachers about poverty reduction and the strategies for reducing poverty in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Most youths and graduates of secondary and post secondary institutions in Akwa Ibom State lack the skills to compete in the rather weak economy and tight labour market. They roam the streets searching for jobs in order to overcome unemployment and poverty; whereas technical and vocational education was designed to give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. Dike (2005) noted that the neglect of technical and vocational education might have contributed to the high unemployment and rising poverty among youth because many of them lack the basic job skills; they are struggling with the challenge of acquiring employable skills since the society is focused mostly on formal university education. Therefore, it is on this basis that the study was undertaken to emphasize poverty reduction through investment in Technical Education in Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

- (1) To assess the opinions of technical teachers about poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State.
- (2) To ascertain the strategies for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State.

Significance of the Study

The government will realize the need to invest heavily in technical education through adequate funding, retraining of teachers, provision of facilities etc., so that people can acquire technical knowledge and skills to combat economic recession and poverty. The technical teachers will see the need to update their knowledge and skills in modern trends in science and technology. The students and the general public at large will be well informed of the role vocational and technical education plays in curbing economic recession in particular and poverty as a whole for economic recovery.

Research Questions

- (1) What are the opinions of technical teachers about poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State?
- (2) What are the strategies for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Method

Design of the Study

The type of research design adopted in this study was a survey research design. Surveys are used frequently in educational research to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions and other types of information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 131 technical teachers in all the seven Technical Colleges in Akwa Ibom State (Akwa Ibom State Technical School Board, 2015).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 60 technical teachers were drawn as sample for the study through simple random sampling technique. The sample size was 46 percent of the population of the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher-developed instrument captioned, "Poverty Reduction through Investment in Technical Education Questionnaire (PRITEQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The instrument had 12-items rated on five point likert scale with options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UN), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) for eliciting the options of technical teachers about poverty reduction and also a section for rating the strategies for reducing poverty in Akwa Ibom State.

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo – Akwa Ibom State – two experts in the Department of Vocational Education and the other from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability coefficient of the instrument stood at .86 which was determined using Cronbach Alpha formula.

Method of Data Analysis/Decision Rule

Frequency count, simple percentage, mean and rank ordering were used to answer research questions. If the calculated mean value is greater than the rating mean value of 3.50, the item is accepted and if the calculated mean value is less than the rating mean value of 3.50, the item is unaccepted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research Question One

What are the opinions of technical teachers about poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1

Mean Analysis of the Responses of Technical Teachers about Poverty Reduction

N = 60

S/N	Statement	\bar{X}	Remarks
1	Poverty reduction may occur through investment in technical education	3.85	Agree
2	Human capital investment is essential to Akwa Ibom State progress.	4.01	Agree
3	Technical education will improve the formation of human capital and increase productivity.	4.20**	Agree
4	Investing in technical education leads to high growth of income, technical progress and new capital goods.	4.15	Agree
5	Technical education is a vital tool for accelerating growth and productivity in Akwa Ibom State.	4.15	Agree
6	Productivity determines standard of living in Akwa Ibom State.	3.78	Agree
7	Improved methods of technology products depend on technical training.	3.95	Agree
8	Increase on life long training and learning is essential for reducing poverty.	3.65	Agree
9	Technical training can potentially offer people a route to non-traditional jobs.	3.68	Agree
10	Technical education for the 21 st century is the best requirements of the service sector.	3.61	Agree
11	Technical education is the way out to the special problems of transition economics	3.60	Agree
12	Demand for skilled workers has increased over the unskilled in Akwa Ibom State.	3.55*	Agree

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The highest mean score * The lowest mean score

The results of data analysis in Table 1 reveal that the calculated mean value

s for all the items are greater than the rating mean value of 3.5. Technical teachers in Akwa Ibom State in their responses have agreed that poverty reduction may occur through investment in technical education; that technical education will improve the formation of human capital and increase productivity; that investing in technical education leads to high growth of income, technical progress and new capital goods; that technical education is a vital tool for accelerating growth and productivity in Akwa Ibom State among others.

Research Question Two

What are the strategies for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2
Percentage Analysis of the Responses of Technical Teachers on Strategies for Poverty Reduction
N = 60

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent (%)	Remarks
Siting of industries/skills acquisition centres	12	20.00	2nd
Funding of poverty reduction programmes	10	16.66	3th
Giving loan to the poor	06	10.00	5 th
Mandatory technical education	15	25.00**	1 st
Checking of managerial lapses	06	10.00	5 th
Training people for self reliance	08	13.34	4 th
Creation of equal opportunities	03	05.00*	7th
Total	60	100%	

**** The highest percentage frequency**

*** The lowest percentage frequency**

Data analysis in Table 2 indicates suggestions for effective poverty reduction programme for Akwa Ibom State. It was observed that 60 teachers participated in the survey, 15(25%) of them indicated mandatory technical education as capable of reducing poverty in Akwa Ibom, 12(20%) teachers favoured siting of industries/skills acquisition centres by government as necessary for poverty reduction, 10(16.66%) teachers said adequate funding of poverty reduction programmes will enhance poverty reduction, 8(13.34%) teachers thought that training people for self reliance will enhance poverty reduction, 6(10%) teachers responded that poverty reduction can be achieved by giving loans to the poor and checking managerial lapses while 3(5%) teachers agreed on creating of equal opportunities.

Discussion

Results of the data analysis showed that poverty can be reduced through investment in technical education in Akwa Ibom State. In support of these findings, Bolaji (2012) found that TVET programme is the most adequate tool for self reliance, economic survival and advancement of knowledge accumulation. Bolaji stressed that it is expedient that private establishments, philanthropists, federal, state and local governments invest massively in the promotion of Nigeria’s technical and vocational education. The findings of the study is backed up by work of Dike (2005) that to reduce the burden of unemployment and poverty on the youths, the government should improve funding and increase access to technical and vocational education. Ijaiya (1998) confirmed that investing in vocational training would go a long way towards reducing poverty, in that most children from poor homes prefer functional education which would provide them skills for earning their livelihood.

Findings from the study also indicated in order of preference that mandatory technical education, siting of industries/skills acquisition centres, funding of poverty reduction

programmes and training of people for self-reliance would enhance poverty reduction. Dike (2009) backed up the findings that Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies. Dike further stressed that vocational and technical education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as a productive citizen in a global society; hence, adequate fund should be allotted to vocational and technical education.

Educational Implications of the Findings

The implication of the findings to education is that technical skills for self-reliance can be acquired in the school environment where the workshops are adequately equipped with tools and facilities for practical work and training. Besides, enough qualified teachers and instructors in different areas of technical education must be there to impart the technical knowledge and skills to the learners. Increase in funding for vocational and technical education will boost the standard of skills needed for livelihood and poverty reduction.

Technical education and vocational training must globally reduce shortage of skilled workers, continuously upgrade workforce skill levels, help vulnerable groups escape unemployment, adjustment to service sector and micro-enterprise needs; and cope with the special situation of transition economy. It is educationally implied that technical education would improve the formation of human capital and also increase productivity in Akwa Ibom State. Hence, teaching and learning of technical education will be functional if there is a balance between theory and practice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that investment through technical education can help to check the economic recession and promote economic recovery. Investment in technical education could take different forms such as adequate funding of technical education programme, building of technical workshops and provision of modern facilities to schools and vocational training centres across the state. It is also deduced that mandatory technical education programme could be capable of equipping the individual with skills for gainful employment in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

1. Government and international agencies should respond to poverty situation in Akwa Ibom State in terms of funding technical education programme heavily.
2. Government and educational planners in the state should support vocational and technical education and make it compulsory at all level of education.
3. Local government should site skill acquisition centres in their areas for easy training of people for self-reliance.
4. The government should provide technical training to teachers and instructors to update their knowledge and skills in modern technologies.

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