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## **Adult and Non-formal Education for Poverty Eradication and National Development**

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**By**

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### **Abstract**

*Scholars believe generally that the higher the literacy level, the higher the standard of living of people, thereby eradicating poverty in the society. The paper examined adult and non-formal education for poverty eradication and national development. The study also observed that poverty eradication needs both adult education and congenial changes in the political and economic systems and structures of inequality in which the poor may be entrenched. The paper also observed that conscientizing individuals will help men and women who may be resigned to the condition of their poverty to become aware and understand the political economy of their poverty. It concluded that education generally is the most powerful weapon which nations can use to change the world.*

Adult and non-formal education refers to efforts at improving the provision and implementation of developmental programmes which have basic education or training

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component. Such programme provision usually takes place outside the formal education system. When educational process is non-formal, it means that the education is out of schooling and the rigid form of formal system is absent.

The eradication of poverty is usually a primary development objective. The concept of poverty which reflects its numerous visible attribute is multi-dimensional in nature. Poverty according to Muller (2002), Na' Allah (2004), and Kaghe (2006) is multi-dimensional, because it affects many aspects of the human condition, including physical, moral and psychological. For many societies, poverty is a concrete phenomenon and can easily be identified. It is also relative because the population that may be classified as poor in a developed economy could be regarded as a materially well off in a developing country. Each society as pointed out by LeBlanc (2003), defined poverty in its own terms. Poverty is a condition in which human beings are subjected to all forms of socio-economic deprivations, leading to drastic fall in the quality of life (Jones, 2002). Poverty can also be seen as a state or condition in human development which is characterized by lack of basic life skills, good education, productive assets, water low level of energy consumption, poor health, unsanitary condition and general lack of economic infrastructure alongside lack of active participation in decision-making process as it affects individuals or communities (Udosen, 2007). Poverty can be measured through the use of either the poverty time or human development index (HDI) (Ebong & Mbalisi, 2005). Poverty can be located within the context for contradiction between resources available to an individual and the demand and condition of his/her environment (Ayo, 2007). Irrespective of how poverty is defined, the poor have been described as those who can not obtain adequate income, find stable job, own property or maintain healthy condition (Obadan, 1997).

They also lack adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their basic needs (Sancho, 1996). Thus, the poor are often illiterate, poor in health and have short life Span (World Bank, 1995). They have no access to basic necessities of life. They are unable to meet both social and economic obligations, lack skills and gainful employment, fewer economic assets and sometimes lack self esteem (Olayemi, 1995).

The challenges facing all government of developing countries including Nigeria, is that of eradicating poverty and minimizing the income disparities between the rich and the poor that exist in their respective societies. Hence, successive governments in Nigeria have demonstrated their commitments to improving the socio-economic wellbeing of the rural and urban poor through various efforts. Some of the most realistic past approaches taken at eradicating poverty in Nigeria include the establishment of some programmes and schemes which have helped in eradicating or reducing poverty. These are the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) in 1975; Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976, Agricultural Credit Scheme (AGCS) in

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1977; National Primary Health Care Agency (NPHCA) in 1989; Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1977; and Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1977. Current efforts at poverty eradication are numerous, among them are; Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 2000; National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, Nigerian Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) in 2002; National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2003; Commodity Marketing and Development Companies (CMDC) in 2003; Presidential limitative on selected commodities; cassava, rice, cocoa, vegetable oil, livestock and fisheries from 1999-2007 among others.

### **Education and Poverty Eradication**

Human development ensures adequate building of human capacities and the construction of self-reliance of people, therefore investment in people contributes to growth and employment for dynamic participation in cultural, social and productive affairs (Arimah, 2001). In Nigeria, education is regarded as instrument “par excellence” for effective national development (Federal Republic Nigeria, 2004). This statement suggests that education is a powerful tool which can be used to solve most of the problems facing a nation. For this to be there is the need, for education to be managed effectively. Effective management of education implies among others, the education at the three levels should achieve its predetermined objectives. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), education will be effectively managed when students are trained to be literate and be able to count, have manipulative skills, trained in trades and crafts of the community at the primary level , prepared for higher education, provided with technical-vocational and other skills for employment at the secondary level , and also trained for skills in paid employment, self-employments and research at the university level . The change that tranforms American society was the magnification of the functions the universities were called upon to perform (Bassey, 2005). The fundamental roles of the university in Nigeria are teaching, research and community service. Babalola (2007) believes that Nigerians need education beyond the basic to eradicate poverty at individual level. This implies that while government has embraced the good idea, the improvement in basic education will lay a sound foundation for national development. Nigerians should not forget that access to quality tertiary education provides the superstructures for increased productivity and that of the nation. Nwangwu (2007) argued that programmes on poverty eradication and/or other strategies aimed at reducing unemployment and improving the standard of living of people may not yield the expected positive result unless graduates of tertiary institutions are equipped with skills with which to be self-reliant. Education in a broad sense is a process by which an individual acquires the many physical and social capabilities demanded by the society in which he or she is born into to function. It is to a nation what the mind is to the body just as a diseased mind is handicapped in the coordination and direction of the bodily activities.

Education as defined by Okojie (2007), involves the socialization of individuals to become integral part of the society in which he lives. Education has a direct way of eradicating poverty in any country. It is viewed as the single most important factor in improving the quality of the lives of people both economically and socially. According to Ojo and Vincent (2000), “education is many things to man, a voice to success, a passport to the unknown and a catalyst to great heights. Education empowers, refines, civilizes, enlightens, enriches and give confidence to man. It is the bedrock for national development and poverty eradication. The level or nature of development in a country is often considered to be an offshoot of the nature of her educational programme and system. This point is true to the extent that the technological objectives of a nation are usually rooted in the educational programme of the country. Thus, education for poverty eradication is a veritable factor for socio-economic emancipation and economic self-reliance of any country. The wealth or poverty of nations depends on the quality of higher education (Akpome, 2009). This therefore means that the quality of graduates pushed into the workforce by higher education sets the pace for national growth and development.

### **Adult Education and Poverty Eradication**

The poor and the powerless are capable of discontent, but they are not always able to organize themselves to demand social justice. They need help from selfless teachers and activities. In the present context and conditions in the developing and the developed world, adult educators seem to be the best hope for the world’s poor.

Unfortunately, while adult educators have understood the deprivations and indignities of the poor living in conditions of poverty, they have been satisfied with offering them dialogue and discussion on education. To understand the poverty of nations, political economy analysis should be undertaken within the systems theory perspective covering systems and structures from the global to the local. Adult educators must become committed activists on behalf of the poor and build an overall system for advocacy and delivery of adult education that is comprehensive and commensurate with the challenges thrown up by the present world system. With appropriate adult education and necessary component of efforts, poverty eradication will be inevitable, in that it will to a very large extent give a sufficient stimulus or strategy for changing existing condition of poverty. Poverty eradication needs both adult education and congenial changes in the political and economic systems and structure of inequality in which the poor may be entrenched. The dialectic between adult education and poverty eradication cannot be assumed to be suffused with morality and charity. Adult education is mostly the instrument used in mobilizing, socializing and educating all stakeholders involved in poverty eradication projects who will in turn advocate for structural changes and expansion of appropriate programmes of poverty eradication.

### **Conscientization for Poverty Eradication**

The first challenges for adult educators at the individual level is what a Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire called conscientization. The concept of conscientization assumes that everyone has the right to share in the control of his society and the capacity of every individual to transform his surrounding (Ogwudire, 2007). In other words it is all about consciousness raising – that is helping adult men and women who may have resigned to the condition of their poverty to become aware and understand the political economy of their own poverty, only by understanding these structures, can the poor avoid their own exploitation at the hands of officials, preachers, shopkeepers, money-lenders, and middlemen.

In relation to the above ideas is the need to inform these individuals about the development services made available in the area by government functionaries and Non-governmental Organizations, but which are not being accessed by individuals in rural and urban areas.

### **Conclusion**

Poverty eradication can only be real if adult and non-formal education programmes like acquisition of skills are seriously taken care of and effectively implemented by government. The lack of acquisition of skills on the part of individuals has been considered the bane of the economy of Nigeria and Africa in general. Education is the most powerful weapon which a nation can use to change the world. Therefore, the adaptation of functional education and poverty eradication programmes are twin brothers that can empower the youths for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

It is therefore suggested that the following measures if well articulated will mitigate and or eradicate poverty among Nigerians.

1. The government should provide power and other infrastructural facilities so as to encourage growth and development of small and medium scale enterprise who most often than not are employer of youths.
2. Education is an investment that pays off anytime anywhere. Therefore, the governments, cooperations, communities, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and individuals should invest in education in order to help prepare the youths for challenges ahead.
3. They should be a link between industrial policies and the university curriculum to develop the individual towards skills acquisition of the industrial sector.
4. There is need for centres for Adult and non-formal education to be established in all community, especially vocational education centres where women and young drop-outs should learn various skills like tailoring, hair-dressing, weaving, soap-making, bakery, etc.

5. Enhancing individuals (especially youths) through science and literacy education with skilled training will help eradicate poverty and dependability on government for jobs among individuals.
6. If education should be managed for self-reliance, self-employment and hence poverty eradication then this calls for a complete re-orientation and re-engineering of the educational management and machinery at all levels of training, especially as touching proper planning, monitoring and evaluation of education; curriculum contents and implementation, teacher factor and motivation; adequacy of infrastructure and funding.

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