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## Regenerating Technological Education for Poverty Eradication and Self Reliance for National Development

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**By**

OKON EDET ABIA

*Department of Technical Education,  
College of Education,  
Afaha Nsit.*

GABRIEL S. UDOFIA

*Department of Technical Education,  
College of Education,  
Afaha Nsit.*

**And**

WILSON UDOFIA

*Department of Technical Education,  
College of Education,  
Afaha Nsit.*

### **Abstract**

*It is a well known fact that millions of Nigerians are living in abject poverty. This may not be connected with the fact that majority of this millions are without basic technical and applicable skills. This paper stresses the need for technical education in combating or eradicating poverty thereby, strengthening self-reliance and sustainable national development of both the individual and the society. This paper tries to conceptualize poverty, its eradication, its causes and effects or consequences. How can technical be used to eradicate poverty? How can poverty eradication give rise to self-reliance and sustainable national development? This paper attempts to answer these and other questions. The paper concludes by proffering some recommendations.*

A critical look at the Nigerian populace shows that the syndrome of poverty is not hidden. This could be identified almost in all levels of our existence such as in  
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education, social and cultural developments. This is despite the fact that Nigerian ranks among the nations that are naturally endowed with both human and natural resources. It occupies an enviable position in the League of Nations, yet poverty, strive the land.

Successive Nigerian governments, whether different military or civilian, have tried in some way or the other, through different programmes, to address this menace but without much success. This is because governance which relates to the establishment and existence of transparent and accountable institutions and practices with adequate capacity to develop public policies and laws that would enable a country to manage its markets, political and social life in an open and just manner for the achievement of sustainable human development is lacking in Nigeria, (Idemudia and Oboh, 2008). This should have formed a situation where sustainable human development is anchored and engendering a development that is self-perpetrating and reliant, energized from within the social structure. In this way it becomes possible to empower the social structure to become more productive to manage and generate the environment poverty and hence, minimize the social and economic conditions that lead to poverty, deprivation, want, strife, and anomie.

A situation where university, polytechnics and other school leavers do not have jobs due to lack of skills therefore heightens the need for more emphasis on technical and vocational education, (Asumde, 2001). The National Policy on Education (1981) defined technical education as that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. How technical education can be an effective tool to combat and eradicate poverty and promote self-reliance is therefore the central theme of this paper.

### **Concept of Poverty and its Eradication**

There are many aspects to the definition of the term “poverty”. The perception as to what constitutes poverty has evolved over the ages, from generation to generation, as it has also varied from society to society and from culture to culture. Poverty in its generic term is a social, economics and political deprivation. From the view point of United Nations Development Programmes, (UNDP), (2000), poverty is a state of deprivation of the basic necessities of life. And from this context, the UNDP named three types of poverty to be absolute poverty, relative poverty and material poverty. It described absolute poverty as the inability of the individual to provide physical subsistence for himself or herself in terms of food, clothing and shelter including lack of access to potable water supply, health services, basic education, transportation and work. Relative poverty is being described by the same source as lack of income necessary to satisfy their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Relative poverty connotes rural poverty. This is the inability on the part of the sections of the society to satisfy their basic needs.

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UNDP (2000) also defined poverty in terms of human poverty as lack of basic human capabilities such as illiteracy, malnutrition, abbreviated life-span, poor material health, illness from preventable diseases, lack of access to goods, services, infrastructures, energy, sanitation, education, communication, drinking water, etc.

Olaitan (2000), saw poverty as the scarcity of human basic needs or the inability of an individual or society to acquire human basic needs for existence. The World Bank Report quoted by Audu (2005), pointed out that different approaches to poverty eradication are being evolved by different governments, the world over based on their peculiarities. In Nigeria, successive governments had evolved various programmes to improve the living standard of its citizens. According to Audu (2005), such programmes include Operation Feed the Nation; Green Revolution; National Directorate of Employment; Directorate of Food; Roads and Rural Infrastructure; Family Support Programme; Better Life for Rural Women; Family Economics Advancement Programme; the establishment of People's Bank, Community Banks and mass transit programmes etc.

The setting up of Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) in 2000 gave rise to what is now known as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) which was empowered with ten million naira as an interventionist approach to fight against poverty. According to Audu (2005), these programmes could not succeed in alleviating poverty because the approach was based on employing youths rather than making them to be self-reliant and productive. This can only be achieved by laying emphasis on technical and vocational education. Apart from bringing about sustainable poverty eradication, it will form the bedrock of technological and sustainable human development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987) therefore defined sustainable human development as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It involves the process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of commitments, the orientation of technology and constitutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations.

### **Concept of Self-Reliance and Sustainable Development**

The concept of self-reliance according to Utibe (2009) means proper adherence to the provisions of the National Policy on Education, NPE. The policy stated that the national objectives to be that of:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy

5. A land of bright an full opportunities for all citizens

According to Omotayo (2009), when valuable resources such as patriotism, self-reliance and productivity are properly harnessed, sustainable socio-economic and political development can be attained. He stated that this could be achieved through general curriculum review, training of students to be qualitative and emphasis should be placed on skill acquisition rather than academic certificates.

Ikoku (1980) described self-reliance as the right and ability to set one's own goal and realize them as much as possible through personal efforts using personal factor. It is also the ability to be able to sustain oneself without relying on others for assistance. He further stated that it is highly organized struggle against those historical formations that set out to prevent nations from realizing their potentials and true meaning of independence. The dictionary of contemporary English (1978), described self-reliance as the use of one's own powers of action and judgment without depending on others.

Ocho (1988) asserted that the concept of self-reliance has cultural, economic and political implications. To be self-reliant, we must look inwards and draw inspiration and strength from our own environment. Te concept of self-reliance is rooted in the psychological acceptance of oneself as potentially equal to any other human being.

Eboh and Ukpong (1993), equated self-reliance to the attainment of self-sufficiency, independence and autonomy without unnecessarily resorting to begging or borrowing. Inyang (2009) was of the opinion that a self-reliant nation is one t hat achieves a steady supply of local raw materials for its industries; one that diversifies its economy to reduce dependence on foreign assistance; one that improves its revenue generation capacity as a strategy for economic development; a nation that generates full and gainful employment for all the majority of its citizens; one that protects its domestic industries from aggressive external competition and above all a nation that is capable of mobilizing its indigenous scientists and technologists for research and development activities so that new ideas are invented and new products manufactured. Self-reliance connotes self-direction which is the ability to propel oneself towards a particular direction. A self-reliant individual could have high productive potentials.

According to Okonkwo (2009), self-reliance involves a set of activities directed towards self-realization through the organization of the entire activities of the people into definite sets of preference and priorities in which one set may be admitted when other more important alternatives are not pressed. Self-reliance is a conscious, purposive activity and has the advantage of being open-ended which can only be described than defined. To be self-reliant calls for a system of education where citizens

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acquire the right type of values and attitudes, practical skills and knowledge that would enable them attain self-development through self employment.

Umoh (2007) defined sustainable development as a rational approach to economic administration and the creation of economic policies, to manage public matters efficiently and predictably, to show respect for future generations by integrating concern for environmental protection into decision making and progressively to evolve towards democracy, the full participation of all concerned actors while taking into account specific local circumstances. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, (WSSD) (2002), listed about ten strategies for the successful achievement of sustainable development. These are:

1. Making globalization work for sustainable development
2. Poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods
3. Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.
4. Promoting healthy sustainable development
5. Access to energy and energy efficiency
6. Sustainable management of eco-systems and bio-diversity.
7. Managing the worlds fish water resources
8. Finance and technology transfer
9. Sustainable development initiative for Africa, and
10. Strengthening the system of internal governance for sustainable development.

### **Causes/Consequences of Poverty**

Poverty can be traced to various sources which include unemployment, population explosion, wars, unhealthy environment, improper planning by the government and inefficient infrastructures. Natural disasters such as flooding, famine as a result of drought, earthquake, windstorm, etc constitute factors that can lead to extreme poverty. Unfavourable government policies on immigration, land allocation, employment generation and general insecurity also aggregate poverty.

Societal attitudes and policies such as high interest rates, corruption, unequal distribution of natural wealth and incomes, unstable currency exchange, hoarding and smuggling also give rise to poverty. Insufficient facilities such as electricity, water, communication, roads add to the cost of production which put the prices of goods and services out of the cost of production which put the prices of goods and services out the reach of the common people, making poverty inevitable.

The consequences of poverty in any given society cannot be over-emphasized. Poverty causes people to rebel against authority and contributes to crime in the society, (Audu, 2005).

According to Oludotun (2001), the increasing rate of crime such as armed robbery, “419”, corruption, prostitution, nepotism, drug trafficking, cultism and other social vices are definitely the product of poverty in the country. When people feel uncatered for, their loyalty and patriotism become shaky and the effect can only be imagined than experienced.

### **Technical Education and Poverty Eradication**

The unique nature of Technical Education is inestimatable. It is a system of education that benefits both the individual and the society at large.

Olaitan (1996), stated that apart from the individuals being the primary beneficiary of technical education, the nation is usually the fundamental beneficiary of this form of education. Technical education therefore serves as an excellent instrument of making positive changes in individual’s life and the society at large. Technical education can be used as a tool for poverty eradication in so many ways such as:

- (a) **Entrepreneurship Education:** Nwaokolo (2004), defined entrepreneurship as the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This ability, according to him, involves the acquisition of technical education skills, ideas and managerial competencies necessary for self-employment.

According to International Labour Orga (ILO) (1991), entrepreneurship education is an area of study that induces those attitudes and skills essential for responding to one’s environment when conceiving, starting and managing a business enterprise.

- (b) **Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** The eight broad goals of the MDGs are:
1. To eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
  2. To achieve universal primary education
  3. Promote gender equality and empower women
  4. Reduce child mortality
  5. Improve maternal health
  6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
  7. Ensure environmental sustainability
  8. Develop global partnership for development

According to Umara and Ibratim (2010), the National Economics Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) reported that Nigeria articulated to tackle poverty through restructuring of the economy, ensuring wealth creation, empowering citizens and transforming the national mindset. These are the strategies for the achievement of the MDGs. To them this can only be achieved by imbibing the tenets of technical education.

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- (c) The traditional role of technical education should be regenerated and reinforced because through it millions of youths and adults are being trained in one area or another. It has moved from apprenticeship method in the beginning to full time and formal education system where the beneficiaries can be self employed.
- (d) The regeneration of technical education will reduce the rate of unemployment by encouraging self employment through the production of competent and capable workers who can develop the country. In other words, this form of education enables individuals either to be salable and employable or be self-employed.
- (e) Audu (2005), was of the opinion that the establishment of technical colleges, polytechnics and mono-techniques by governments was aimed at alleviating unemployment and check-mating school drop-outs. To him, the establishment of such institutions was to train the youth to have salable skills that would make them not only to be employable but also establish their own industries and businesses.
- (f) Technical education encourages the dignity of labour and refines the individual's attitude to work. A person with expertise and skills sees himself or herself as hardworking and competent and can easily influence others to take to the same path.

Finally the regenerated technical education will encourage all the domains of learning, especially the cognitive and the psychomotor skills needed for our technological and industrial development.

### **Conclusion**

There is no alternative to technical education if the fight against poverty is to be won. It is only through practical skills got from technical education that can make an individual or society to be self-reliant. And only a self-reliant individual or society that can contribute meaningfully to national development.

### **Recommendations**

For technical education to be able to address poverty eradication and self-reliance for national development, some of these recommendations are imminent:

1. Technical education should practically be made an integral part of general education.
2. There should be National Policy on Technical Education
3. The curriculum of technical education should be reviewed periodically at all levels of education i.e. from primary to tertiary.
4. Entrepreneurship training should be made an integral part of technical education.

5. Teachers of technology should be trained and retrained to keep them abreast of new and modern trends in sustainable developments.
6. Seminars, workshops and conferences should always be organized for technical education personnel.
7. All technical education institutions, programmes and policies should be manned by professionals.
8. Organized private sector, corporate organizations, agencies and professional bodies should be made to contribute to the curriculum review of technical education.
9. Government should ensure that technical education is well funded to ensure that both facilities and personnel are in order so that the objectives of this system of education can be achieved.

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