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Education and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: A Philosophical Assessment

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Abstract

Researchers agree that one of the educational outcomes is economic self-reliance. This functionalist view points to the inextricable nexus between education and poverty reduction in human societies. This link appears to be among the rationales behind the tremendous increase in educational institutions in Nigeria. Yet, as educational institutions multiply, the rate of poverty has unabatedly increased. This predicates on the apathy of successive government towards education sector; its poor funding and management of the sector. Based on these realities, this study assesses the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population. The study employs two research questions and two null hypotheses. Sequel to this, a twenty (20) item questionnaire was developed and administered to twenty (20) respondents, comprising eight (8) males and seven (10) females educationists drawn from twelve (12) public universities in Nigeria. Mean scores and standard deviation were as well used to analyze the data collected while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistics. The results show that though education can lead to poverty reduction, it has not significantly reduced mass poverty in Nigeria due to poor funding, poor teacher instruction, poor payment of teachers, inadequate training of teachers, poor motivation of teachers and students, poor school infrastructure and educational facilities, poor supervision of instructions and lack of parental co-operation. The study therefore concludes that government adequate funding and positive management will truly enhance the quality of education and foster human creative thinking that engenders job creation, economic self-reliance and poverty reduction.

Introduction

The rationale behind the much emphasis on education in modern Nigeria is economic self-reliance which drives human life above poverty line (Ekeng & Inyang, 2019). From this functional perspective, one of the basic goals of education in Nigeria is to foster human economic self-reliance. Federal Government in National Policy on Education (2004) reiterates this goal pointing out that the quality of education at all levels also has to be oriented towards inculcating “acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance” (p.8). This goal is premised on the fact that through education, human mind is enriched with creative thinking and ideas that engender economic self-reliance. Ekeng and Inyang (2019) corroborate this view insisting that education is one of the main keys to economic development and improvement of human welfare. This is because of the educational character of instilling general knowledge and skills, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and imbuing people with intellectual abilities that will help them to locate economic opportunities and cling to them.

From this vintage, it means that education is among the major determinants of lifetime earnings and poverty reduction in human societies. This is as amidst successive governments' inability or unwillingness to create employment and reduce mass poverty, education develops human intellectual capacities, skills and social awareness through which people are equipped to surmount the challenges of physical, social and economic environments and achieve economic self-reliance. This is more so as education opens up so many grey areas, and exposes people to many possibilities in different sectors of the society ranging from science and technology, commerce, economics, robotics, business, agriculture and a host of others (Ogungbe, 2019). This appears to be why education cuts through all aspects of human environment; social, physical, political, economic, religious, cultural and psychological. With these capacities, it largely means that contents of economic self-reliance are skills, approaches and ideas in the mind gained through quality education. Based on this connection, scholars unveiled the inextricable link between education and poverty reduction in Nigerian society.

To reduce poverty in Nigerian society therefore, people are encouraged to be educated. As such, there has been a dramatic increase in number of candidates and educational institutions. This is such that more students are annually admitted into Nigerian public institutions as increasing graduating number of candidates face unemployment, joblessness and poverty (Akinyeme, Igot & Ikuenomore, 2012). Amidst this reality, the fundamental question bothers on whether education amidst government's inability or unwillingness to create job/employment truly accomplishes the goal of poverty reduction in Nigerian context?

In response to this, the World Bank (2000) estimates that over 45% of the Nigerian population live below poverty level while about two third (2/3) are extremely poor. In congruence with this estimate, Ndanusa (2019) reports that Nigeria's 2004 relative poverty measurement was 54.4% which unprecedentedly increased to 69% (or 112,518,507 Nigerians) in 2010. Despite the increasing educational institutions therefore, mass poverty in Nigeria increases from 27% in 1980 to 66% in 1996, 70% in 1999 and 85% in 2011 (Bukoye, 2015). Along this lane, NEPAD in Chinweuba (2019) breaks these statistics further observing that more than 74% of the people in North West live on less than one dollar a day, North-East 78%, North-Central 70%, South-West 28%, South-South 30% and South-East 23%.

This increasing poverty rate is so because among other rationales, Nigerian education sector is poorly funded. The paltry annual budgetary allocation to education is regressively low for such crucial sector of the society. In view of this, Adeyemi (2011) and Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) in her annual report and statement of accounts reveal that in the year 2000, only 8.7% of Nigeria's annual budget is meant for education. Retrogressively, the annual budget for education went down to 4% which is 369.6 billion naira in 2016, 7.4% which is 550 billion naira in 2017, 7.04% which is 605.8 billion naira in 2018, 7.05% which is 620.5 billion naira in 2019, 6.7% which is 691.07 billion naira in 2020 and 6.3% in 2021 (Abdulssalam, 2021). These budgets are indeed lower compared to United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended standard of at least 15% to 20% of governments' budget to be allocated to education. Sadly, Dike (2008) even alleges that out of each annual budgetary allocation to education by successive Nigerian governments, only 2% actually gets to the classroom. Consequently, this fosters poor teachers' salaries, unstable teachers' salary

payment, poor teachers/students motivation, poor instructions, poor supervision of instructions, inadequate provision and maintenance of school infrastructures and facilities, poor teaching and learning conditions and poor education which are central in human self-reliance.

Moreover, there has been less improvement in quality curriculum that reduces poverty and guarantees human economic self-reliance. The present Nigerian education curriculum is therefore devoid of dynamic thinking that takes care of the ever changing economic environment. Thus, Nigerian educational training dwells more on what to think and less on how to think. The former encourages rote learning of age-long topics, subject matters and theories. The latter encourages logical thinking, critical thinking, dynamic reasoning, dialectic and innovative thinking that engenders new ideas and discovery of economic opportunities. Due to this lack, Nigerian education system has become largely less capable in inculcating “critical and logical psychic abstraction that generates essential ideas which leads to meaningful self-employment amidst the high unemployment rate in the country” (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2018, p.6).

The above situation is worsened by the fact that educational ministries, agencies and jobs are largely left under the care of people “whose professional inclination does not have relevance to education” (Abiogu, 2019, p.28). The result has been absence of skills; principles and methods necessary for individual socio-economic performance, competitiveness and self-reliance (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2018). Consequently, Nigerian education sector is suffering quantum set-backs which currently plunges it to a state of comatose and inability to foster economic self-reliance in Nigerian larger population (Abiogu, 2010). Based on these, there is a geometric growth of Nigerian population whose education has pragmatically minimal impact on poverty reduction in the country.

Conceptual Clarifications

The outstanding concepts in this discourse are education and poverty reduction. Education is a major component in human capital development. This is because it is the process through which skills, knowledge, attitude, and approaches necessary for achieving better economic opportunities, better life and competent performance of socio-economic responsibilities are inculcated in the people. As such, Ndanusa (2019) posits education as the process of training people to achieve social needs and aspirations. However, Shukla (2007) explains education as “the totality of the process within which the student’s experiences are structured in order to promote desired learning” (p.70). This desired learning is often the development of intellectual capacities; skills and social awareness of people, in order to enable them surmount the challenges of their social and physical environment. In this sense, education is understood as the factor behind quality manpower and human resources in the society. It is the life wire of any nation, foundation of economic revival and regeneration of the people.

Poverty reduction, on the other hand is a process that aims at improving the living conditions of the poor (Ekeng & Inyang, 2019). Poverty reduction is the act of increasing the access of poor people in the society to the basic needs of life such as better living conditions, food, health system, safety, etc. Thus, poverty reduction is the processes of increasing human income to enable people sufficiently secure basic goods and services and ensure healthy living. In this sense, poverty reduction aims at enhancing the ability of the poor towards meeting their social,

political, religious and economic needs. Along these understanding, the link between education and poverty reduction is glaring in the capacity education has in increasing human access to vital information about economic opportunities. Education therefore awakens human openness to economic opportunities. It exposes human mind to many possibilities in different sectors of the society.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to expose the connection education shares with poverty reduction. This is by assessing the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction. The study also aims at determining the extent education has reduced poverty among larger Nigerian population.

Research questions

The following research questions have been stated to guide this study.

1. What are the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the Nigerian larger population?
2. To what extent has education reduced poverty among the Nigerian larger population?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the Nigerian larger population.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design. Based on this, mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected while null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistics. In this direction, 2.5 was used as a cut-off mark. This implies that any item whose mean is 2.5 and above indicates positiveness while below indicates negative responses. Descriptive research design according to Nworgu (2015) is the study which aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner; the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. It is a study interested in describing variables in relation to a population. Thus, descriptive research is considered appropriate here because the study is purpose-based towards determining the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and assessing the extent education has reduced poverty among Nigerian larger population.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection in this study is questionnaire. According to Agbaegbu, et al (2004), questionnaire is “a set of questions presented to respondents in a written form which the respondents are expected to answer in writing” (p. 145). The centrality of this instrument in this study as Nworgu (2015) observes, lies in the fact that questionnaire elicits demographic

information regarding the respondents and also provides required information regarding the situation being assessed. The questionnaire is entitled “Questionnaire on educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and extent education has reduced poverty in Nigeria”. The questionnaire comprises twenty (20) items aimed at addressing the two research questions that guided the study. The instrument has four rating scale response patterns of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), strongly disagree (SD) and disagree (D) for research question one and very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE) for research question two. The questionnaire would be used to elicit information from twenty (20) respondents (10 male and 10 female educationists) regarding the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and the extent education has reduced poverty among Nigerian larger population.

However, Taro Yamane formula stated below was used to determine the sample size since the population is finite.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

In addition, the study employed a simple random sampling technique using stripes of paper method to select the sample size of twelve (12) public Universities in Nigeria. After a thorough reshuffling, the researcher not looking into the container dipped hand and picked strip of paper. The researcher unfolded the strip, recorded the name of the University in the paper, folded again and put it back into the container. The process was repeated until twelve (12) public Universities with highest appearance in the draw were selected. The process of replacing after each draw of a strip of paper that was drawn before a subsequent draw is referred to as sampling with replacement. This was done to ensure that each public University in Nigeria has an equal probability of being drawn. However, the questionnaire was directly administered to twenty (20) respondents who are educationists in these twelve (12) public Universities in Nigeria. On-the-spot retrieval technique was also employed to collect the questionnaire. This ensured 100% return of the instrument.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Mean ratings of educationists on the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the larger Nigerian population.

S/N	Questionnaire items	No of male educationists	Male Educationists X	STD	Dec	No. of female educationists	Female Educationists X	STD	Dec
1	Quality teacher instructions	10	2.7	2.84	A	10	3.2	3.37	A
2	Creative thinking/mind that enhance economic ideas; job creation and self-employment	10	3.2	3.37	A	10	2.7	2.84	A
3	Development of intellectual capacities, skills and awareness that equip people to surmount poverty	10	2.8	2.95	A	10	3.6	3.79	SA
4	Exposition of economic possibilities/opportunities in different sectors of the society	10	3.6	3.79	SA	10	2.8	2.95	A
5	Economic consciousness	10	3.2	3.37	A	10	2.7	2.84	A
6	Wisdom for better economic decisions	10	2.7	2.84	A	10	3.2	3.37	A
7	Ability to locate economic opportunities	10	3.6	3.79	SA	10	2.4	2.52	A
8	General knowledge of poverty reduction	10	2.8	2.95	A	10	3.6	3.79	SA
9	Awareness of poverty reduction mechanism	10	2.7	2.84	A	10	2.7	2.84	A
10	Development of reasoning abilities	10	2.8	2.95	A	10	2.8	2.95	A
Grand mean			3.01	3.169	A		2.97	3.126	A

The finding of the study as presented in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the larger Nigerian population. The result shows that Male and Female Educationists' responses to items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 have mean ratings within the range of 2.50 – 3.49 set as criterion for Agree. This means that those items are educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among Nigerian larger population. Result also shows that Male Educationists' responses to items 3 and 8 have mean ratings within the range of 2.50 – 3.49 set as criterion for Agree. Male Educationists as well rated items 4 and 7 within the range of 3.50-4.00 which is the criterion set for Strongly Agree. These mean that those items are educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among Nigerian population.

The result however shows that Female Educationists' responses to items 3 and 8 have mean ratings within the range of 3.50–4.00 set as criterion for Strongly Agree. Female Educationists also rated items 4 and 7 within the mean range of 2.50 - 3.49 set for Agree, showing that those items are educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the Nigerian population.

Table 2: Mean ratings of educationists on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population

S/N	Questionnaire items	No of male educationists	Male Educationists			No. of female educationists	Female Educationists		
			X	STD	Dec		X	STD	Dec
11	Exposing learners to reasons for increasing poverty	10	0.9	0.31	VLE	10	1.0	0.35	VLE
12	Provision of educational curriculum that directly addresses poverty reduction and economic self reliance	10	0.8	0.28	VLE	10	1.8	0.63	LE
13	Exposing learners to dynamic economic reasoning	10	1.8	0.63	VLE	10	1.4	0.49	VLE
14	Instilling dialectic and innovative reasoning to	10	1.4	0.49	VLE	10	1.6	0.56	VLE

	foster poverty reduction								
15	Imparting skills central in poverty reduction	10	1.0	0.35	VLE	10	0.8	0.28	VLE
16	Teaching of methods that foster poverty reduction	10	0.9	0.31	VLE	10	1.6	0.56	VLE
17	Teaching of means of economic competitiveness	10	1.6	0.56	VLE	10	0.9	0.31	VLE
18	Inculcating principles of economic self reliance	10	1.2	0.42	VLE	10	0.8	0.28	VLE
19	Inculcating economic ideas and consciousness in the learners	10	2.0	0.70	VLE	10	0.7	0.24	VLE
20	Exposing learners to the importance of economic self reliance and poverty reduction	10	1.0	0.35	VLE	10	1.8	0.63	VLE
	Grand mean		1.26	0.44	VLE		1.24	0.433	VLE

The finding of the study as presented in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population. The result shows that Male and female Educationists' responses to items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 have mean ratings below the range of 1.0 -1.49 set as criterion for Very Low Extent. These mean that there are mean ratings of very low extent among male and female Educationists on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population. The grand mean of 1.26 and standard derivation of 0.44 for Male Educationists and grand mean of 1.24 and standard derivation of 0.433 for Female Educationists also show that the educationists on the extent education has not reduced poverty among larger Nigerian population are in very low extent; meaning that those items were not implemented as supposed.

Test of Hypotheses using t-test

A T-test statistics was carried out in order to further determine educational qualities that can reduce poverty and extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population.

DECISION RULE: If the T-calculated is greater than the T-critical, reject the H_0 but if the reverse is the case you do not reject it.

Table 3 below shows the T-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the Nigerian larger population.

Sex	X	SD	N	DF	Standard Error	T-Cal	T-Critical	Decision
Male	3.01	3.169	10	18	0.338	1.86	0.15	REJECTED
Female	2.97	3.126	10					

Because the T-Cal (calculated value) is greater than the table critical (T-Critical), the null hypothesis is rejected. This means;

H_{01} There is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction among the Nigerian larger population.

Table 4 below shows the T-test of significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population.

Sex	X	SD	N	DF	Standard Error	T-Cal	T-Critical	Decision
Male	1.26	0.44	10	18	0.305	1.96	0.13	REJECTED
Female	1.24	0.433	10					

Because the T-Cal (calculated value) is greater than the table critical (T-Critical), the null hypothesis is rejected. This means;

H_{02} There is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female educationists on the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population.

Discussion

The burden of this study was to assess the relationship education has with poverty reduction. Along this lane, the study focused on educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population. In addition to these, the study focused on finding whether there was a significant difference between the educational qualities that can lead to poverty reduction and significant difference in the extent education has reduced poverty among the larger Nigerian population. The findings of the study state that education is related to poverty reduction because it is specifically meant to foster human economic self-reliance through its qualitative contents. This notwithstanding, the findings of the study admit that though education is related to poverty reduction, educational programmes in Nigerian society has not reduced poverty. This is glaring in the increasing

poverty among the Nigerian larger population despite the increasing number of educational institutions in the country.

These findings are in congruence with the empirical studies of Okeke (2007) and Nwokenna (2010) which discovered that though education is necessary for economic self-reliance, educators and administrators lack the conducive environment and facilities and required motivation needed to inculcate the necessary poverty reduction educational qualities in the students. These lacks according to researchers not only weaken teachers' morale, they also frustrate them, undermine their productivity, force them out of the classroom and depreciate their dedication and professionalism.

The study of Awe and Ajadi (2010) also support the findings of the present study as it avers that deficiency in Nigerian education sector has undermined overall quality assurance measures on academic programmes. Thus, the results of the present study show that Nigerian education system hardly dwells on poverty reduction, human economic emancipation and self-reliance. These are punctuated by high unemployment in Nigerian society which clearly shows that education has not reduced poverty in Nigeria.

Conclusion and recommendation

Specific solution to human economic poverty in Nigeria lies with quality education. This is because quality education addresses poverty reduction and economic self-reliance, exposes learners to dynamic economic reasoning and instills skills, methods, principles and means of poverty reduction. However, the maintenance of quality education that leads to this lofty knowledge remains the task of government. The problem of increased poverty among the larger Nigerian population despite the increasing number of educational institutions therefore stem not largely from teachers but from government's unwillingness or inability to ensure quality education through adequate motivation of teachers and supervision of school activities. Based on this, the results of the analyses and those of the tested hypotheses state that education has to very low extent reduced poverty among Nigerian larger population. The study therefore strongly recommends motivation of teachers at every level of Nigerian education to ensure their dedication, performance and professionalism. The study also recommends education reform that will emphasize means of economic emancipation and self-reliance.

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