Research Paper

Polytechnic Education and poverty Reduction in Nigeria: Challenges & Prospects

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ABSTRACT: *Education is a process of developing knowledge ability in students in such a way that they use this knowledge to improve themselves and their societies. On the other hand, polytechnic education which is the focus of this paper plays a vital role in human resource development of a country by creating skilled manpower enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. It is expected to give technical and vocational training which is about skill acquisition with the aim of making Nigerian students self-reliant. Thus, this paper examines poverty, its causes, effects on the Nigerian society and the prospects of polytechnic education in reducing the level of poverty in the country. It also bring to fore the challenges faced by polytechnics like poor funding, deplorable infrastructures, absence of National Polytechnic Commission etc. and makes suggestions on how these challenges can be overcome in order to bring the country out of the mire of poverty.*
KEYWORDS: *Poverty, Polytechnic education and Vocational training*

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global phenomenon which affects the continents, nations and peoples differently and in varying degrees. It is disheartening that despite the natural and human resources that Nigeria is blessed with the incidence of poverty is on the increaseday in day out. This is made manifest not only in abysmal decline in economic indicators and trends but in the general impoverishment of the vast majority of Nigerians which has largely led to the increase in crime rate, armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry in the Country . Successivegovernments in Nigeria have made different attempts at alleviating/ reducing the incidence of poverty all to no avail. Such attempts include- National Directorate Of Employment [NDE], Directorate Of Food, Road And Rural Infrastructure[DFRRI],Family Support Programme [FSP],National Poverty Eradication Programme [NAPEP], 7-point Agenda,Transformation Agenda,Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria [YouWIN], National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy [NEEDS].

Since all these attempts have not yielded meaningful results on reducing the incidence of poverty in the country, there is need for a shift on polytechnic education as a tool to alleviate poverty in our land because it is expected to give technical and vocational training which is about skill acquisition with the aim of making Nigerian students self- reliant. If the aim can be adequately achieved, it would engender poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Thus, this paperexamines polytechnic education in Nigeria; poverty, it causes and effects on the society and the prospects of polytechnic education in reducing the level of poverty in Nigeria. The paper also brings to fore the challenges of polytechnic education and makes suggestions on how these challenges can be overcome in order to bring the country out of the mire of poverty.

II. THEOREOTICAL FRAMEWORK

Institutional approach was considered explicit and problem-solving with the focus purely on the institutions of government as the major policy makers: congress, the executive, the courts, and the bureaucracy represent the major institutions that address the issues of public policy. This approach is the traditional school of thought in social science popularly refers to as traditional political science which involves more on the studies of

the various institutions of government. It should be made obvious that these institutions are very imperative for the motive of understudying the political, social and economic development of the state as a whole.

Koven et al (1998) declares that policy prices is usually studied in its institutional setting, that is in the various branches of government, the legislative branch, where the laws are enacted, the judicial branch where adjudication of justice is made, the bureaucracy where policy is implemented and the executive branch where laws are signed and vetoed. An institution can be defined as any persistent system of activities, or any pattern of group behavior (Vernon Van Dyke, 1969). More concretely, an institution has been conceived as offices and agencies arranged in a hierarchy, each agency having certain functions and powers.

Succinctly, the institutional approach focuses on the formal structures and agencies of government. Polytechnics have been described as the institutions expected to serve as the tool for poverty reduction in the country through the proper and apt designing of vocational skill acquisition programmes and intimating the youths to acquire necessary skills which make them self-reliant, employable and employers of labour. Having observed inadequacy of white collar jobs in the land today, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) as an institution should design and develop the policies around these objectives to reduce the abject poverty which affects the voluminous number of Nigerian citizens.

III. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Education
Education is a process of developing knowledge ability in leaders in such a way that they use this knowledge to improve themselves and their societies. It is also the act of methodic development on training of the mind, capabilities or character by means of instruction or study. It is a way of socializing people into the community, for sustaining customs and traditions in addition to the modification or changing of same in line with extant ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation.(Oluwatusin& Daisi,2017:54).The National Policy on Education (2013) described education as an instrument for national development and social change which also maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society. Education is expected to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society at large. Thus, education must be seen as surpassing schooling and certification.

Polytechnic Education
The establishment of Yaba Higher college in1932 by the colonialists marked the beginning of higher education in Nigeria. The purpose was produce technical middle level manpower thatwould relieve colonial administrators of menial tasks. The Yaba Higher College was upgraded to a polytechnic inn1963. Doern(2008) defined "polytechnic education as career- focused applied education that spans trades through advanced degrees, delivered in an environment where students receive hands on training that enables them to more readily apply their skills' Sanni (2009) also defined polytechnic education as that type of education that provides training of professional character with great attention devoted to practical skills in such areas as engineering, survey, forestry etc.

Technical & Vocational Education and Training
The National Policy on Education (2013) defined technical and vocational education and training as those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Also Uwaifo (2009) conceived of technical education as the training of technically oriented personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators and implementers of technological development of a nation. It is believed that the acquisition of these practical skills would not only make its graduates self – reliant but employers of labour.The goals of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) are highlighted below:
(a) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels.
(b) Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development and
*(c) Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self- reliance economically.***(NPE,2013:16)**

Poverty
Poverty has multifaceted definitions. According to Case and Ray (1989), poor people are defined as people with very low incomes. A country is perceived to be poor if she has failed to cater for her citizenry, lacks amenities and lives in fear. Poverty is the lack of capability to function effectively in society. Inadequate education can thus be considered a form of poverty (AmartyaSen, 2001 in Amzat 2010). UNDP[2000] also defined poverty as a state of deprivation or denial of the basic choices and opportunities needed to enjoy a

decent standard of living, to live a long, healthy, constructive life and participate in the employment and in the social, political and cultural life in the community. It is also a situation where an individual or household fails to attain and maintain a specific level of wellbeing which is considered as the acceptable minimum standard of living in a given standard[Oluwatusin&Abolarin-Egbebi,2015].Different types of poverty are identified inWosuowei[2018:25]

1. *Absolute poverty: This is extreme kind of poverty involving the chronic lack of food, clean water, health, housing.*
2. *Relative poverty: This kind is usually in relation to other member and family in the society e.g a family may be considered poor if it cannot afford some superior amenities other families can afford like summer vacation, university education.*
3. *Situational poverty: This occurs when people or families become poor because of some natural disasters like earthquake, flood sometimes, people can come out of this situation if they are given the necessary assistance.*
4. *Generational/ chronic poverty: This is a more complicated type of poverty. It is handed over to individuals and families from generations before them.*

Causes and Effects of Poverty

There is no singular cause of poverty. Poverty is prevalent in societies as a result of several factors. These include high level of illiteracy, low economic growth performance, policy failure, income inequality, epidemic diseases, mis-management   of public fund, unemployment, overpopulation, environmental problems such as flood and erosion. Others include bad governance, inheritance of poverty unrests, and high rate of divorce which causes feminization of poverty.

It is hard to separate causes of poverty from its effects.Of a fact, poverty is associated with nothing good but ills.Nemedia[2001:72] identified these to include:

Severe maternal deprivation, absence of recreational opportunities, lack of access to economic as well as political power, inferiority complex, isolation and social degradation. Poverty also breeds hunger, malnutrition, low-life expectancy, human and political rights abuse, diseases, illiteracy, ignorance, hopelessness, uncertainty and all those feelings that negate the resilience of the human spirit and blithe expectation of a better tomorrow.

Moreso, poverty breeds frustration and loss of value for life. It also creates disillusionment about morality. Poverty makes people compromise on moral values or abandon moral values completely as seen in the Nigerian polity where people go to extent to get money like armed robbery engaging in money female , rituals-by using female panties, killing, raping minors, kidnapping etc. which have invariably made our societies unsafe and insecure.

IV. POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA

Poverty in Nigeria used to be significant- life expectancy is 52.2 years in 2019 and 69% of Nigerians live below the poverty line (Nwachukwu, 2019; World Bank Group). Poverty has placed Nigerians in a disadvantaged position that makes it difficult for them to develop their basic physical and intellectual potentials.Modern economies are thriving because their educational programmeshave been restructured in order to include skill contents. This is because, modern economies require specific technical skills and these are generally provided for by polytechnics.In this vein, polytechnic is one of the tertiary institutions expected to provide technology education in the country. The specific goals of technology education stated in National policy on Education (2013:30) are:

(a) *Provide courses of instruction and training in engineering other tehnologies, applied sciences, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower.*
(b) *Provide the technical knowledge and skills necessary for the agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria;*
(c) *Give training that impart the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologist and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self – reliant;*
(d) *Train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man and*
(e) *Give exposure on professional studies in the technologies.*

From the above, we see the pivotal role that polytechnics are expected to play in the technological advancement of the country. Polytechnic turn out well-skilled labour force that have been exposed to functional entrepreneurial skills acquisition and employability skills needed for gainful employment or for self – reliance. This is so because polytechnic education is technical education both in content, in outlook and in instructional

delivery.Different centres of entrepreneurial development, skills acquisition, innovation development e.tc.are set up in polytechnics across the country. These centres have different units from which students are free to choose according to their interest; some of these units are – aquaculture, apiculture, snailery, tie & dye, soap production, simple electrical gadget, welding &fabrication, horticulture, ICT, bakery & confectionery, fashion designing and events management. These have helped to make polytechnic graduates to be creative, innovative, be business driven and acquire saleable and competitive work skills that will make them self- reliant. They are able to develop the skills in the use of tools in order to provide goods and services for the welfare of the general public. It can be seen that polytechnic has in her little way contributed to turning out employers of labor but this turn out has not been significant in reducing poverty among the masses because of some challenges that are clog in the wheel of its progress. If the needed attention is given to polytechnic education, it will invariably widen the employment opportunities of Polytechnic graduates and thereby reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria.

V. CHALLENGES OF POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigerian polytechnic education is today confronted with a myriad of problems ranging from financial paucity, deplorable infrastructure, industrial actions, students' unrest, inadequate manpower to discrimination being faced by graduates of Higher National Diploma in comparisonwith their counterpart in the universities across the country. These as highlighted have crippled the system from carrying out the objectives of establishing polytechnic in the country and the reduction of poverty in the context of this paper. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

Financial Constraint

The sourcing, appropriation, allocation and utilisation of funds are critical factors in the administration of a polytechnic. The government budgetary allocation of funds to all sectors is usually not adequate. The best that is expected of any good manager is to ensure the allocated funds are effectively appropriated and judiciously utilised.

Another source of funding is from Tertiary Trust Fund (TETFUND) in which millions of naira are allocated using the approved sharing formula to tertiary institutions for academic development; ratio of 3:2:1. Universities 3, Polytechnic 2 and Colleges of Education 1. The ASUP is arguing for increase in the ratio in its favour arguing that polytechnics programs are capital intensive in terms of equipment, laboratory and workshop acquisition.

Lack of Constant Curriculum Review

The constant review of the curricula as it is required from time to time as the circumstance of technology advances is not being maintained. The fast changing world requires that curricula be reviewed in line with contemporary reality. Although, financial cumbersomeness has been adduced as the major hindrance to this as the cost of the review is very high and time consuming.

Inapt Ground to Train Staff

Polytechnic has a unique catastrophe; it has no specific institution where to train its staff as it is the case in Colleges of Education. For example, in Colleges of Education, for one to qualify for employment as an academic staff, one must possess a university degree and combined with a teaching qualification. It is also the case for a University academic staff that must possess a university degree to qualify as an academic staff in a university. Polytechnics derive their academic staff directly from Universities. Such a situation has left polytechnics with no option than to be recruiting its academic staff from the universities. In a competitive situation sympathy and loyalty of staff in this case are placed on university cause rather than for polytechnic cause.

Equipment

The polytechnic system by all intents and purposes requires more equipment as it is highly, practical-oriented in training, contents and in all ramifications, but the state of these machines are deplorable. More so, the crop of available technological equipment is inadequate for the population of students in the schools.

Staff Unionism

The frequent strikes being embarked upon by the staff unions are telling very hard on the smooth running of the institutions' academic activities. The three unions; Academic Staff Union of Polytechnic(ASUP), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics(SSANIP), Non Academic Staff Union(NASU) make different and sometimes conflicting demands which are difficult to satisfy all at the same time. They all have separate, and sometimes conflicting and combined demands. It is always difficult to meet the unions' demands due to high cost of implementation. Lack of appreciation and understanding of the technical requirements by the

government also contribute to prolonged strikes. In the year 2014 due to ASUP's prolonged strike, the polytechnic sector lost one complete academic session. Over the last few years, polytechnics were being closed every semester. The result of this closure had contributed immensely to the delay in graduation, misplacement of talents on the part of lecturers by lazing around in addition to huge financial loss which cannot be quantified adequately.

Students Unionism

Students Union government do embark on demonstrations usually demanding on the following issues and facilities: hostels, bus services, sports equipment and facilities, water supply, electricity supplies, internet services, health centres, students centers, arbitrary increase in school fees, delay in payment of entitlements(SIWES, scholarship, bursary etc), support for staff unions cause. Maladministration also provokes students and staff to go on demonstration and strike. However, students' demonstration is erratic with mob action and sometimes resulting to violent actions which do lead to vandalisation of the little infrastructures on the campuses.

Teaching Staff Retention

The condition for employment into polytechnics for a lecturer cadre is a first degree with second class lower and he is expected to acquire a second degree in the same discipline before he attains to senior lecturer cadre. Chief lecturer cadre being the peak is attained with additional academic publications from thereon. However, any additional academic qualification acquired by a senior or chief lecturer does not guarantee his/her stay in the polytechnic. He will equally be attracted by a university. Therefore most of the lecturers who acquire PhD do not stay in polytechnics to teach thereby denying the students and the polytechnic from their newly acquired expertise.

Discrimination

There is growing discrimination and disenchantment from the polytechnic sector between the graduates of the polytechnics and the perception of the society as it relate to placement and progression. Lastly, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) has not shown adequate commitment in meeting the needs and demands of polytechnic education. Therefore, a separate commission should be established to administer polytechnics in Nigeria.

VI. CONCLUSION

Poverty ravages developing countries in the world over, in which Nigeria is not insulated. Successive governments in Nigeria have made several attemptsat curtailing the ugly tide either to ameliorate or exterminate the hydra-headed and debilitating monster but with no positive effect yet insight.

The role of polytechnics in providing technology, science and practice- based education which leads to the acquisition of occupational life skills cannot be overemphasized. If the needed attention is given to polytechnic education,it will invariably widen the employment opportunities of Polytechnic graduates and thereby reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria.

VII.RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Legislation: It is very necessary to have legislation for the establishment of technical schools at all federal constituencies leading to the award of Higher certificates as technicians that would also qualify its graduates for admission into polytechnics; who can ultimately become PhD holders since Section 2-(2)(a) of the Federal Polytechnics (Amendment) Act has offered the polytechnics an autonomous status for awarding degrees. The passage of the National Polytechnics Commission act would also go a long way in strengthening and empowering polytechnic education.

2.   Funding: Federal and state governments should increase their budgetary allocations for polytechnics in order to improve the state of facility and infrastructures in the system. The Council and Management of polytechnics should also endeavor to make use of the available funds efficiently and judiciously.

3.   Staff Training: Intensive training and retraining for academic and non-academic staff in order to make them relevant in the fast changing technology is needed so that their products would also be globally relevant.

4.   Equipment: Laboratories must be fully provided with the state-of-the-art equipment on a continuous basis for the staff and students to compete favourably with their counterpartsacross the globe.

5.   Staff and Students' Welfare: Staff and students must be provided with adequate incentives to motivate them for higher productivity. Sports facilities are essentials for both staff and students.

6.   Entrepreneurship studies: Entrepreneurship studies must be emphasized in our curricula such that all graduates of the polytechnics become employers of labour and not job seekers. Thus, every polytechnic must

put in place a functional andviable entrepreneurial centre which will enable students in their skill acquisition pursuit.

7.   Good leadership: Motivation through good governance and leadership right from management down to staff and students would go a long way in enhancing the quality of training in polytechnic sector.

8.   Reorientation of the Populace: There is the need to orientate the populace, the polytechnic students that they are not second-class citizens in the hierarchy of education in the country. They are the brains behind the technological emancipation of Nigeria. Also, government should come up with institutional mechanisms at addressing the lacuna in the polytechnic curricula to merge with the universities and the lecturers should be ready to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to discharge aptly to the students.

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