Human Resource Development and Poverty Reduction in Borno State

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Abstract: The relationship between human capacity development and poverty reduction cannot be undermined in understanding the concept of development. This paper therefore, assesses human resource development and poverty reduction in Borno State. The objective is to examine how human resource development can help in reducing poverty in Borno State. The method of study used was review of relevant literatures. It was gathered that human resource development entails people acquiring meaningful and productive skills that enhances their capabilities to engage in productive activities that lead to earning of meaningful livelihood. The paper concluded that poverty level in Borno State has not been reduced significantly because there is scarcity of jobs especially among the youths which is caused by lack of employable skills and adequate knowledge. The paper thus recommended that the government should invest in human capacity development through skill-oriented educational policies and poverty eradication programmes.

Keywords: Human Resource, Development, Poverty

Introduction

The relationship between human capacity development and poverty reduction cannot be undermined in understanding the concept of development. This is why world over, poverty and unemployment have become two major indices for measuring underdevelopment in a nation. Interestingly and also unfortunately, African countries have failed to beat the two indices, reason being that most African countries do not pay much attention to human capacity development of their populace. But, no society can develop above the quality of life of its society. The level of development in a society is proportionate to the level of development of its populace. Rodney (1972) explains development in human society is a many sided courses. At the level of the individual is one level which implies skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing. A society develops economically as its members increased jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature. Therefore, food security, basic education, freedom from disease and adequate nutrition are basic human needs that should be met for improvements in the material conditions of life of the people, consequently inducing economic growth and reducing poverty (Lewin, 2000).

Poverty can be viewed from different perspectives and its magnitude may be relative to prevailing factors in a society. According to the voices of the poor, poverty is much more than a simple explanation (Narayan, 2000). It may be considered as the absence of material resources that guarantee the wellbeing of a people living in a society. This view is supported by Kakwani (2001) who sees poverty as lack of resources to obtain the minimum necessities of life. Also, World Bank (2013) consider poverty as deprivation in well-being. Borno State, like most states in Nigeria and like many African societies, have continued to grapple with the conundrum of poverty. Despite conspicuous and copious policy declarations, there seems to be a looming gap between policy objectives and policy outcomes. The deepening levels of poverty of a vast majority of the population of Borno state over the years and across regimes still constitute a major challenge to the state’s socio-political economy. More than 70% of the populations of the state, majority of whoreside in the rural areas, live below the poverty benchmark of one dollar per day (Mohammed, et al., 2017). Thus, they suffer hunger, disease, low level of education and high mortality rate. Even the current terrorist activities in Borno State, which now affects other states in the north-east, is not unconnected to the socio-economic milieu in which the state is enmeshed. In view of the above, this paper will assess how human capacity development can help in reducing poverty in Borno State?
Objective of the paper

The objective of this paper is to critically examine how human resource development can help in reducing poverty in Borno State.

Methodology

There are several methods of understudying human resource development in relation to poverty. These include a purposive sample survey method using classical ‘control group’ methods, a critical review of relevant literature and through purposive case studies, evaluations of programmes and projects. However, due to time and resource constraints, this paper depended solely on review of relevant literature were most of the papers are source from google scholar, Elsevier, Scopus and local journal publications. The paper adopts plain review process due to the convenience of access to materials.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

This paper premised within the Human Development Approach introduced a new way for advancing human wellbeing. It is a theoretical framework that entails expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. Human development is focused on the people and their opportunities and choices. In terms of people, human development focuses on improving the lives people lead rather than assuming that economic growth will lead, automatically, to greater wellbeing for all. Income growth is seen as a means rather an end in itself. In terms of opportunities, human development is about giving freedom to lives they value. In effects this means developing people's abilities and giving them a chance to use them. For example, educating people would build their skills, but it would be of little use if they are denied access to jobs, or do not have the right skills for the local labour market. And in terms of choice, human development is, fundamentally, about more choices. It is about providing people with opportunities, not insisting that they make use of them. No one can guarantee human happiness, and the choices people make are their own concern. The process of development-human development- should at least create an environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop to their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives that they value.

The concept of Human Development was propounded by Amartya Sen (1999) and later expanded upon by Martha Nussbaum, Sabina Alkire, Ingrid Robeyns and others. It further broadened existing knowledge of both poverty and development. It places human focused poverty reduction at the centre of global development agenda and addresses the limited scope and failings of previous economists’ interpretations of poverty by broadening definitions of ill-being to incorporate more than simply average income and consumption levels (Desai 1991). According to this approach, by investing in people, we enable growth and empower people to pursue many different life paths, thus developing human capabilities. The most basic capabilities for human development are: to livelong and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable (e.g., to be educated), to have access to the resources and social services needed for a decent standard of living, and be able to participate in the life of the community.

One measure of human development is the Human Development Index (HDI), formulated by the United Nations Development Programme. The index cuts across statistics such as life expectancy at birth, an education index (calculated using many years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and gross national income per capita. Though the HDI does not capture every aspect that contributes to human development, it is a standardized way of quantifying human capability across nations and communities. Other measures of Human Development include Human Poverty Index (HPI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure. Consequently, the progression of the Human Development Approach, conceived specifically for developing countries, has furthered a broader, multidimensional and more contextual understanding of poverty, hence its adoption for use by this paper.

A pre-requisite for understanding the role of human resource development on poverty reduction is an assessment of the nature and profile of poverty. To an average or layman, poverty is the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support. Global issues (2014) defines poverty as the state of the majority of the
world’s people and nations characterized by lack of access to good healthcare services, low quality education, hunger, malnutrition and disease. Kayode (2012) sees poverty as a condition in which individuals and households cannot meet or satisfy the basic necessities of life i.e. food, clothing and shelter and other basic social services and privileges that will make them to live a decent and fulfilled life. Okoh (1998) also defines poverty as a state of deprivation in terms of both economic and social indicators, such as income, education, healthcare, and access to food, social status and self-esteem and self-actualization.

The World Bank gives an absolute definition of poverty as living on less than $1.9 a day. To this end, World Bank maintained that slightly below ten percent (10%) of the world’s population live in extreme poverty as at 2015, down from nearly 36% in 1990. Progress has been uneven, and the number of people in extreme poverty remains unacceptably high. According to the most recent estimates, in 2012, 12.7 percent of the world’s population lived at or below $1.9 a day. That is down from 37 percent in 1990 and 44 percent in 1981. This means that, in 2012, 896 million people lived on less than $1.9 a day, compared with 1.95 million in 1990, and 1.99 billion in 1981. While the statistics might be dropping, progress at the higher poverty lines has been slower. Over 2.1 billion people in the developing world lived on less than $3.10 a day in 2012, compared with 2.9 billion in 1990- so even though the share of population living under that threshold nearly halved, from 66 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 2012, far too many people are living far too little…………………………..(World Bank, 2016).

Nigeria has been on the front burner in global poverty index, with slightly below half of its population living in extreme poverty. Kayode (2012) observes that poverty has continued to be on the increase in Nigeria and eradicating it has been one of the major challenges of successive governments in the country. In spite of the various programmes and projects put in place and huge flow of income over the last three decades, majority of Nigerians are still wallowing in abject poverty. This is ironic considering the abundant resources (human and natural) available in Nigeria. Out of every 10 Nigerians, 7 live on less than $1 a day and the picture is getting bad by the day. On account of poverty in Nigeria, poor parents beget poor children, thereby creating a kind of dynasty of the poor. Life expectancy is a mere 54 years. Infant mortality is 77 per 1000 and maternal mortality stand at 704 per 10,000 live birth which is about the highest in the World. Only about half the population of Nigeria had access to safe drinking water (40% in rural areas, 60% in urban areas). Unemployment and underdevelopment rate is put at 15% of the labour force. Young people see the promise of better health and prosperity as a new infrastructure projects and economic developments. Yet sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where hunger is increasing. This increase is largely driven by the AIDS pandemic, which is compounded by food insecurity and insurgency. One in three Africans is undernourished, one out of seven dies before their fifth birthday, and half of these deaths are due to malnutrition.

Based on the above analysis, United Nations (2009) explains that poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family; and not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one’s food or job to earn one’s living; not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implied living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water and sanitation. No doubt that poverty is a clear indicator of underdevelopment. Kayode (2012) notes that poverty is synonymous to underdevelopment, thus, development implies the eradication of poverty. But this cannot be possible without human resource development.

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. Therefore, the concept of development has been viewed from various positions and perspectives. Nevertheless, it is possible to arrive at some specific indicators of development that are widely acceptable. For instance, it is easy to argue that every human society aspire to have strong, efficient and dynamic economic and political institutions that forestall the yearnings of their people and responds to them accordingly and promptly. It is also possible to argue that in every society there are minimum expectations which all members share. These include access to functional health facilities, safe drinking water, universal quality education and equal opportunity for all members in public affairs where competition based on merit is upheld over and above other considerations. All these are universal values that transcend cultural and political boundaries that will lead to sustainable development (Aliyu, 2013).
The Concept of Sustainable Development

The term sustainable development appeared in the late 1970s and was consolidated in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission. This commission prepared the most broadly accepted definition of sustainable development which states that Sustainable Development is a transformation process in which the exploitation of resources, direction of investments, orientation of technological development and institutional change are reconciled and reinforce present and future potentials, in order to attend to the needs and aspirations of present generations without compromising the possibilities of future generations attending their own needs (Becker, 1964). Sustainable development concept was developed to tackle the “burning issues” of poverty, increasing inequality, environmental degradation and human health hazards. It contains two key concepts: the concept of essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding this priority should be given and the limitations imposed by the state of technology and the social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. Sustainable development is closely linked to economic development through improvement in environmental quality and inputs in the process of raising real income and quality of life.

The Concept of Human Resource Development

From the viewpoint of organizational development, human resource development refers to the vast filed of training and development provided by organizations to increase the knowledge, skills, education and abilities of their employees. However, in terms of societal development, the concept can be defined as the process of acquiring and increasing the numbers of people who have the skills, education and experiences that are critical for the socio-economic development of a country (Harbison, 1962). Human resource development can therefore be associated with investment in human beings and their development as creative and productive resources. It as well covers not only the expenditure on education and training, but also the development of attitudes towards productive activities (Ojo, 1997).

From the above, and for the purposes of this paper, the phrase human resource development has been used to denote the following types of interventions: education, including formal, non-formal, vocational, awareness building; skill formation to enable greater participation in labour markets or in self-employment; and health and nutrition, including dissemination of related information. In principle, interventions of the above types can have a positive impact on labour market characteristics, by making labour more productive. If there is buoyant labour demand in the economy, or particular sectors are being repressed because of e.g. scarcities in particular skills, then such interventions will quickly be translated into enhanced productivity, more jobs and higher earnings. This should also help in the fuller identification and utilization of resources and greater self-employment opportunities, as a better educated and more productive labour force learns to take advantages of existing opportunities.

Human resource development therefore, entails that people acquire meaningful and productive skills that enhance their capabilities to engage in productive activities that lead to earning of livelihood (Adamu, 2002). Meir (1995) defines it as the development human resources concerned with the two-fold objective of building skills and providing productive employment for non-utilized or under-utilized manpower. This assertion is supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (1988) and Awopegba (2002) when they explained that human resource development is the knowledge, skills attitudes, physical and managerial efforts required to manipulate capital, technology, land and material to produce goods and services for human consumption. Therefore, human resource development impacts on productivity, employment, income generation and standard of living (Alagba, 2011).

The result of human resource development is the improvement of capability of people and reduction in poverty. A major issue in the literature is the measurement or indices of human resource development. In this regard, Schultz (1961) in Alagba (2011) identified five ways of developing human resources:

1) Investment in health facilities and services; broadly conceived to include all expenditures that affect the life expectancy, strength and stamina, and the vigour and vitality of the people;
2) On-the-job training, including old-typed apprenticeships organized by firms;
3) Formally organized education at the elementary, secondary and higher levels;
4) Study programmes for adults that are organized by firms, including extension programmes notably in firm; and
5) Migration of individuals and families to adjust to changing job opportunities.

The above argument is also corroborated by Khan (2012) who argued that the main elements of poverty reduction relating to human resource development and improvements in every society are education (with skills building), health, population programmes, water supply and sanitation.

**Human Resource Development and Poverty Reduction in Borno State**

Borno state was created on February 3, 1976 following the split of the North Eastern State by the then administration of General Murtala Muhammad. It has a land mass of 35,868sq.mi and occupies the greatest part of the Chad Basin. The state, with a population of 5,925,668 populations (based on 2006 census). The state shares borders with the Republics of Niger to the North, Chad to the North-East and Cameroun to the East. Borno state has a climate which is hot and dry for a greater part of the year, although the southern part is slightly milder. The state has two major vegetation zones viz; Sahel in the North with severe desert encroachment covering most of the Chad Basin areas, and Sudan Savannah in the South which consists of scrubby vegetation interspersed with tall tree woodlands (Borno State Government, 2008).

Available statistics shows that more than 60 percent of the population of Borno state resides in the rural areas and are mostly farmers. To this end, the state government has continued to evolve measures aimed at alleviating the poverty of the populace. Several programmes have been formulated by the government at different times primarily to enhance the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. Some of the programmes are initiated either by the federal government or international organization and are domesticated by the state government.

In 2004, Borno State created a ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Youth Empowerment primarily charged with varied responsibility of tackling the menace of poverty among the people of the state. It was meant to empower the youth and poor through the provision of poverty alleviation materials and micro credit loans expected to improve their socio-economic status (BOSEEDS, 2005). The ministry is also saddled with the responsibility of training and retraining the youth in various trades with a view to empowering them to be economically self-reliant. To enable the ministry under take these noble initiatives and activities, huge amounts of money was expended by the Borno state government in order to improve the living standard of its people.

Yusuf and kawuwa (2014), in a review of the poverty reduction programme of Borno state government, from 2008 to 2012, through the state Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Youth Empowerment, observed that it made significant effort at alleviating poverty among its teeming youths and under privileged people. These assistances included provision of micro credit grants, skills acquisition in various trades, poverty alleviation materials to groups, communities and individuals as well as assistance to communities engaged in communal self-project, with a view to addressing problems confronting people in the state. Ndahi (2012) supported this view when he said that, Borno State Government distributed many materials to youths and were trained on various skills and given take off grants to enable them start their own business.

In addition to the establishment of the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Youth Empowerment, Borno State has also benefited from some programmes of the federal government, civil society organizations and Nigeria’s development partners. These programmes are the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) in 1975; Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976; Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) in 1977; The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986; National Primary Health Care Agency (NPHCA) in 1989; Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1997. Current efforts at poverty alleviation are numerous, which include: 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 Initiatives on selected commodities: Cassava, Rice, Cocoa, Vegetable oil, Livestock and Fisheries from 1999 – 2007 (Funmilola, 2009).

However, most of the programmes did not do much in empowering the rural populace, even though they were designed for that purpose. Hence, no will-power to adopt integrated rural development projects to mitigate rural poverty. More so, several of the programmes had their base in the urban cities, thereby making it more difficult for the rural dwellers to feel their impact. Ihimodu (2004) argued that, empirical records of many of these
programme and project are not impressive enough to bring about the expected transformation on the livelihood of the targeted population. Thus, despite all the huge amount of money allocated by government, poverty in Borno in general and Maiduguri metropolitan area particular seems to persist (Yusuf and Kawuwa, 2014).

Moreover, many of the programmes focused more on poverty reduction rather than on human resource development in terms of empowering the individuals with skills that will enable them become independent and fend for themselves. It is said that the best way to empower a man is not to feed him with fish, but to teach him how to fish. Therefore, the shortcomings of some of these programmes to address the root cause of poverty, made them ineffective in the long-run. Ihimodu (2004). The Daily trust (2012) also observed that, poverty alleviation programmes and projects have not achieved their desire result to the transformation of the livelihood of the targeted population.

Finally, lack of effective monitoring has made it difficult to achieve success in many of the programmes of Borno State government. In some cases, money given to the individuals to start their self-initiated businesses or develop their skills is not utilized for that purpose. Rather, some beneficiaries use money given to them to marry more wives or re-engage in frivolous spending. In a review study by Yusuf and Kawuwa (2014), some of the respondent indicated that they got married with money given to them, while others engaged in activities that was not designed in the programmes.

Conclusion and recommendation

Scarcity of jobs combined with lack of employability skills and knowledge is the cause of high youth unemployment in Borno State, and consequently effects the economy as well as socio-political life of the people. However, like most states in Nigeria, Borno state is brimming with untapped talents. It is the responsibility of every government therefore to provide the citizens with the critical skills and resources to realize their potential. To develop as it should, government must take investment in human capacity development very seriously, as no society can compete effectively in the emerging computerized global market place with poorly educated workforce and poorly made goods and services.

Borno State government should adopt a skill-oriented educational principle to strengthen the quality of her education. This is because how quickly a nation recovers from the present global economic predicament depends on the strength of its institutions and infrastructure, ingenuity of the leaders, and productivity of the workers. Vocational and technical education deserves more attention to stimulates the weak economy and create employment for the army of unemployed youth. Finally, poverty as it is an impediment to the peaceful co-existence of our social and political life because it is main cause of our economic dislocation and therefore it must be tackled with appropriate policies from the government.

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