

## **Educational Intervention in Poverty Reduction/Eradication Programmes: A Review of Nigerian Interventions (1960 - 2001)**

**Michael Ugochukwu JOE**

### **Abstract**

Centuries before the colonization era in Nigeria, apprenticeship was the key form of education. In the times of the colonial powers, the system of education was sufficient to raise the knowledge of the colonized to a level of understanding commands in order to serve them. After independence in 1960, between the 'half education' of the colonial era, and the developing western education, Nigeria was not yet ready to adjust capably. One consequence was the poverty situation that many post-colonial governments in succession have struggled with. To battle poverty to a minimum many intervention programmes were introduced.

This paper takes a historical review on the Nigerian intervention programmes between 1960 and 2001. Expository historical inquiry was developed within the history of education, thereby, documents (including books, journal articles, scanned documents, old newspapers and materials available from the internet) were thematically analysed.

Research findings observed that the lack of recognition for the need of training as a vital part of some of these intervention programmes as well as the absence of quality and effective educational aspects contributed greatly to their failures. Among the lot, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) seemed more successful and effective, which could be attributed to the educational nature of these programmes.

Keywords: History, Education, Pedagogy, Intervention, Poverty alleviation programmes, Policy

## **1.0 Introduction**

Before colonization by the British in 1914, Ethnic groups in Nigeria had various forms of education which centred on apprenticeship and oral education. Poverty was categorically not an issue because almost every family had a trade and every one born into the family grew up learning the trade. This family trade could be farming, blacksmith, hunting, fishing, local trading etc.

The crisis of industrial revolution in the west resulted in the need for African colonization. The colonizing power introduced a system of education that was just sufficient to raise the literacy of the colonized to a level of understanding commands in order to be servants to them. When the baton of leadership was eventually handed over to the indigenous leaders in 1960, they were overwhelmed by the existing level of disorientation, illiteracy and poverty. Governments in succession have made efforts to eradicate poverty by introducing policies and programmes that have gained little or no success (Aibieyi & Dirisu, 2010).

Scholars attribute causes of poverty to lack of adequate employment, illiteracy, inadequate infrastructures, lack of access to credit facilities, mismanagement of public funds, bad governance, governments' instability as well as its policies. Based on researches and from affirmations from the everyday Nigerians, it is acknowledged that government approaches to poverty reduction/eradication over the years have not been successful. This issue of poverty has been empirically reviewed by a number of authors. Oshewolo (2010) called poverty a social problem that creates and sustains other problems because the means by which the poor attempts to cope with their problems could be many but with a few positive options. The negative options on the other hand when carried out could pose great treat to social order. Poverty is therefore among the strong causes of its own persistence since it contains toxic elements that constrain economic growth. Nigeria is a country endowed with wealth of various kinds that if well distributed could eradicate poverty. Therefore there is the need to empower citizens to be able to position themselves in order to become partakers of the gains of the economy.

These efforts cannot be attained by business as usual, it will require efforts such as education within intervention programmes (Oshewolo, 2010). In light of this, solving the problem of poverty in a rich country such as Nigeria would go beyond fighting symptoms. Intervention programmes in Nigeria requires more than just capital investments but also a clearly structured pedagogy which will approach problems in the right way. Innocent (2014) stated that; “as lofty as all poverty alleviation programmes may appear, they have not been able to fundamentally mitigate widespread poverty in Nigeria as shown by the reports of various domestic and international agencies such as the National Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank”(p. 7). Oloyede (2014) pointed out that the inability of the Nigerian government to design and implement effective and efficient poverty eradication programmes is as a result of their myopic definition of poverty as is experienced among the people. Poverty should be viewed from a multidimensional position. Concerned international agencies such as world bank have stressed that poverty needs to be seen from directions that would enable a comprehensive approach (Oloyede, 2014). According to Depaepe (2004), a good historical research requires that we approach the representational structures of the group (Depaepe, 2004). Also, in his words, Depaepe (2012) said; “when a researcher looks at contextualized reality from the perspective of educational historiography, he/she sees that the images speak for themselves” (2012, p. 495).

Therefore, in this expository research, a pragmatic historical inquiry was developed within the history of education, which examines the hunger related intervention programmes as they were implemented. This study also critically analyses the intervention measures put in place by the Nigerian government to combat the hunger and poverty that emanated as consequences of colonial ‘half education’ and how these programmes have impacted on the citizenry. Additionally, in order to understand fully the extent of the impact of these intervention programmes, this study aims at unveiling the pedagogical and operational deficiencies associated with the performance of these programmes.

## **2.0 Intervention Programmes/Policies to Fight Poverty (1960-2001)**

### **2.1 National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)**

National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) is the first economic related intervention programme in Nigeria. It was created in 1972 by the Yakubu Gowon led military government. At this particular time in Africa's history, agricultural productivity in the Sub-Saharan Africa was especially depressing. This bleak performance resulted into acute food shortage. This disappointing agricultural output was the consequence of geopolitical instability that resulted from freedom struggles, civil wars and refugee crisis (Hinderink & Sterkenburg, 1983). NAFPP came two years after the Nigerian civil war. Impoverished by the demise of civil war, this programme wouldn't have come in any better time in Nigerian's history. This programme as well as the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) in 1973 was designed principally to fund agriculture. By the creation of the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), the government intent was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in the production of food. NAFPP scheme integrated research, extension and agro-services to help improve farm services. Activities were directed at promoting the adoption of improved farming by providing farm input delivery systems to local farmers.

The educational aspect of NAFPP were directed towards teaching farmers on improved ways of going about their farm operations. Pedagogy focused on: the use of high-yielding seed varieties; the use of chemical seed-dressing; the use of chemical fertilizer; time-of-planting; plant spacing; time-of-weeding; planting position; time-of-harvesting; the use of hired tractor services; the use of modern farm processing facilities and the use of modern storage facilities (Akinola, 1986). This programme was initiated with good intentions and recorded some level of success (Anthony, 2010). The setback experienced came from corruption and poor management in the part of the facilitators (Raheem, Ayeni, Fashedemi, & others, 2014)

## **2.2 Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)**

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was an intervention programme targeted at reducing hunger by means of making food more available to the poor. As the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy was unable to satisfactorily produce enough food for citizens' consumption, the government's launch of OFN by the then Federal Military Government was very much welcomed. OFN was implemented in 1976 by the Obasanjo led military administration. The gross hunger arising from the Civil war of 1966 to 1970 that devastated the South East and South-South region, the drought that was threatening the norther region, and gross shortage in basic food supply to the Nigerian citizens were major events that led to the implementation of OFN.

The objectives of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) when it was launched in 1976 were to mobilize the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production, to encourage the sector of the community relying on food purchase to grow its own food, to encourage general pride in agriculture and to encourage balanced nutrition. The policy of OFN was intended to increase food production by empowering small farmers and encouraging as many citizens as possible to participate in one form of farming activity or the other. Adult education was to play a vital part in the success of OFN. This pedagogical aspect was meant to prepare the ground for an effective introduction of technology into Nigerian farms. (Anyanwu, 1978).

OFN came up with policies that included a more elaborated educational aspect compared to the previous programmes. Yet, as Raheem et al. (2014) pointed out: "OFN spent more money and efforts in getting ill-prepared university graduates to go to the rural areas to teach the peasant farmers how to farm. The irony of the programme was that theoretical farming graduates were teaching farmers that make their living on farming on how to farm. The scheme's only success was in creating awareness of food shortages and the need to tackle the problem" (p. 43).

### **2.3 Green Revolution (GR)**

Green Revolution as a concept began in the 1950s by capitalist states. At that time, the capitalist and the communist political spheres were involved in a rancorous struggle to sell their political ideology and benefits to the underdeveloped world. Therefore, to counter other neo-colonialists strategies of political and military revolution, the capitalists promoted Green Revolution as part of their universal food package to poor countries in South America and Africa. (Orji, 2005). Green Revolution (GR) was embraced by Nigerian government and was launched in 1979 by the Shehu Shagari administration in an effort to come up with a better intervention policy. GR came with almost the same idea as OFN, emphasising on agriculture and food production. GR's objectives were; to reduce dependence on imported food while boosting food crop production in Nigeria and introducing mechanized farming. Green Revolution made efforts to improve on the policies of Operation feed the Nation by introducing mechanized farming. However it lacked the right pedagogical aspect and was plagued by corruption at every level of its execution thus resulting in a failed project with colossal amount of money gone down the drain (Raheem et al., 2014). GR was trailed by the same monster of poor performance as OFN. At the end in 1983 about two billion naira was wasted (Madugba, 2000). GB was abolished when Gen. Mohammad Buhari and Brig. Tunde Idiagbon seized power in 1983.

### **2.4 The National Directorate of employment (NDE)**

In the 1980s, with the arising global economic problems such as the global recession, inherent weakness in the nation's economy, strong fall in oil prices, and the subsequent poor economic policies, unemployment became more serious a problem than it was in the 1970s. This resulted in the closure of some industries and massive lay-offs.

This decrease in employment chances as well as the massive loss of jobs was seen by the Babangida led administration as a great danger to the nation's socio-economic stability. Orji (2005), describing this situation wrote; "West Africa is no more the

favourite of international funding agencies. It has instead become a neglected, dangerous terrain for foreign investors. Progressively this new position of foreign companies, agencies and governments has led to capital flight and its attendant problems of low productivity and operational inefficiency in most of the productive sectors” (p. 24).

The National Directorate of employment (NDE) was then instituted to design and implement programmes that provide employment. The Directorate was inaugurated in 1986 with a fundamental philosophy of preference to self-standing enterprise. The scheme was designed to include four-prolonged educational approaches which are: Vocational Acquisition Training, Entrepreneurial training, Training for Rural Employment and Training for Labour-Based works programme.

NDE approached poverty alleviation in four core programmes which are: Vocational Skills Development Programme (VSDP), Special Public Works (SPW), Small Scale Enterprises (SSE) and Rural Employment Promotion Programme (RPP). Vocational Skills Development Programme which is the directorate’s core programme centred on skill acquisition consisting of 80 trades and was implemented via its four ancillary schemes namely; The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), The School on Wheel Scheme, The Wealth-to-Waste Scheme, The Resettlement Scheme (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005).

A record number of youths gained from the NDE scheme. The schemes’ reaching out and touching the lives of millions of youths put it on the top echelon among the successful economic based intervention initiatives ever implemented in Nigeria (Raheem et al., 2014). Awogbenle & Iwuamadi (2010) reveals that skill acquisition and employment generation through pedagogical approach remained a focal point. (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010) NDE sought to drastically alleviate poverty by means of pure pedagogical approach, therefore, directly addressing the problem of illiteracy and lack of skills.

Of all the intervention approaches by the Babangida regime, NDE appears to be the most successful and is still functional to this day. NDE has become the most successful poverty alleviation programme of all times by reason of its well-articulated pedagogical nature. NDE was so successful that Gen. Sani Abacha's government could not abolish it. While other interventions seek to rain incentives and funding on beneficiaries, NDE simply took the right approach focusing on pedagogy and training. According to Owualah (1999), Firms achieved an appreciable growth in all areas because of the pedagogical nature of NDE (Owualah, 1999).

The Babangida regime (1985 – 1993) came up with several other intervention programmes that focused on infrastructure but were without educational aspects. Those other programmes such as: The Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI) was intended to open up rural communities by means of road constructions and basic amenities provision to boost food production. The Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) was established to encourage large scale commercial farming by assisting famers with subsidies of various kinds. The Peoples bank (PB) sought to make soft loans available to prospective entrepreneurs without collaterals. PB operated as community banks that were intended to be closer to those that need these cheap loans the most (Raheem et al., 2014).

### **2.5 Better Life Programme (BLP)**

The Better Life for Rural Women Programme was established in September 1987 by the then first lady of Nigeria, Maryam Babangida. It was implemented by the National Commission for Women (upgraded to the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development) with an intent of enhancing poor rural women's standing. The facilitators realized that there was need to expand the programme's scope to include urban women and cooperatives that involved men. Consequently, the name was changed from Better Life Programme for Rural Women to Better Life Programme (BLP). BLP was also designed to promote the declaration of women by the US government in 1975.



BLP aimed at inspiring rural women towards achieving better living standards and alerting the rest of the Nigerian population on the problems of women. It focused on educating local village women on simple hygiene, family planning, the importance of child-care and increased literacy rates. Further aims of the programme were targeted towards organising women to be able to improve their life and to seek and achieve leadership roles in the society they live in, inspiring enriched family life experience for women and training them to develop the spirit of self-development, particularly in the fields of education, business, the arts, crafts and agriculture (Orji, 2005) (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005).

Mariam Babangida turned her ceremonial post of Nigerian's first lady into a potent force for the development of women especially those in rural communities. With the launch of BLP, many co-operatives, cottage industries, farms and gardens, shops and markets, women's centres and social welfare programmes were established. Rural women were also empowered by educational schemes that comprises: adult education, primary health care, agriculture, crafts and food processing (Uba & Halim, 2010).

This programme was a particularly expensive poverty eradication programme. Headed by the first lady herself and ran by elite women, there happened to be minimal involvement of rural women for which the programme was intended for in its decision making. Lack of the required adequate pedagogical aspect rendered BLP too conservative and neglecting gender issues which is the fundamental challenges these rural women face. Also, emphasizing traditional women roles rendered BLP insensitive to the real plight of these women whose lives are supposed to be improved (Bola, 1995). This programme struggled with its educating aspect. Training was supposed to be the bedrock of BLP, nevertheless emphasis shifted to other areas. Scholars see BLP as a total failure. Mariam ended up accumulating personal fortune out of BLP officials and friends, thereby turning better life for rural women to better life for rich women (Madugba, 2000).

## **2.6 Family Support Programme (FSP)**

Family Support Programme (FSP) was launched in (1994) by Miriam Abacha, the wife of the then Military Head of State General Sani Abacha. FSP was designed to empower women, thus, introducing a gender element to intervention programmes. FSP organisers believed that women are important in households' and empowering them means directly raising the standard of living of families in Nigeria (Raheem et al., 2014). This programme was necessary to improve previous experiences of women in similar programmes by broadening polices. FSP was a shift of policy driven by the role of family in national development, principally as it effects very important social sectors such as health, education and economic empowerment (Orji, 2005).

The objectives of FSP were; to improve and sustain the family life experience of Nigerians through the promotion of social and economic well-being of the family; to promote human right programmes and policies; to reduce maternal and child mortality and morbidity rate by promoting decent health care delivery; and also alert the government on matters relating to living condition of the masses. The educational aspect of FSP involved carrying out public enlightenment campaigns to sensitise communities on human decency, civil responsibility and concern for the welfare of the disadvantaged. Sponsoring media captions, news talk, television and radio discussions were among the implementation strategies of FSP. FSP established clubs and societies to positively touch rural family-life by means of loan, trainings, organizing workshops, seminars, symposia, public lectures and training schemes (Orji, 2005).

Major setbacks encountered by FSP were the lack of properly outlined policy framework and too much political interference and poor implementation of its well-meaning educational aspect. As with other programmes of this type, it was plagued with corruption and lacked continuity (Raheem et al., 2014). FSP became a gold-mine for the Abacha family. Activities and policies were meticulously put in place to enrich themselves (Madugba, 2000). A lot of noise was made about FSP by the First Lady Miriam Abacha, with little or no achievements to go with it (Uba & Halim, 2010).

## **2.7 Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)**

The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) was designed by the Abacha led government in an effort to create a more encompassing socio-economic poverty alleviation centred intervention to help stimulate economic activities (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005). FEAP was established in 1998 as an empowerment intervention programme to boost the performance of local entrepreneurs involved in production of goods and services. Coming at a time when Nigeria was ranked among the 25 poorest nations of the world, FEAP was targeted at low income families, people directly engaged in agriculture and co-operative societies. This programme was intended to benefit its target group in various ways. There was an expectation that this intervention will bring the Nigerian societies to enjoy improvement in food production thereby causing severe reduction in imported food, enhancing opportunities for exportation of local produced foods, creating rural job opportunities in that way reducing rural-urban migration. Through the pedagogical approach of agricultural extension, people directly engaged in agriculture were expected to experience to a reasonable extent of waste reduction as well as improved waste management through better techniques in food processing, recycling, preservation, storage, packaging, and marketing of farm produce (Raheem et al., 2014).

Beneficiaries were able to acquire loans, and other incentives but were not properly educated on the innovative land use pattern. Though beneficiaries temporarily outperformed non beneficiaries in term of production due to government help, their efficiency was very poor due to the lack of adequate education on how to optimise recourses available to them. This programme failed after two years (Raheem et al., 2014).

### **2.8 The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)**

The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was set up in 2000 by the Obasanjo lead Government as an interim programme to address the issue of rising crime wave caused by unemployment. PAP's objectives were primarily to reduce crime by means of creating jobs and increasing the productivity of the economy (Orji, 2005).

PAP was established with a holistic orientation that could have reduced unemployment if properly executed. Before the targeted idle youths can successfully gain employment, they have to be employable. The educational aspect was the bedrock of this intervention. PAP was linked to a national government agency 'Public Works Employment' hence giving it a political connotation. Unfortunately, PAP never achieved its full objectives because of political rivalry. States led by opposition parties blatantly fought PAP's activities in their states thus, making it a tool of battle against the ruling party. PAP gave way to a more permanent and encompassing programme named National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) (Orji, 2005).

### **2.9 National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP)**

With the mandate to streamline and rationalize existing poverty alleviation programmes, Agencies and ministries, the constitution of the Ahmed Joda Panel in 1999 and the Ango Abdullahi Committee in 2000 led to the emergence of National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) and National Poverty eradication Council (NAPEC) (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005). NAPEP kicked off in 2001 and formed a central coordination point for all anti-poverty efforts at all levels of government. When Obasanjo led democratically elected civilian government came to power, NAPEP was used as an instrument with which to declare war against poverty. It was complemented by NAPEC which co-ordinated poverty actions of relevant ministries, parastatals and agencies (Orji, 2005).

Raheem et al., (2014) claimed this government was the only government to embark on poverty eradication instead of poverty alleviation and as such, the programme was also non sector driven (Raheem et al., 2014). Obasanjo's coming back to power as a democratically elected civilian president after 30 years of leaving office as a military head of state was very good because he seemed to have a better understanding of Nigeria's poverty syndrome. Besides, he did not relent in putting up a more fierce fight against it, thus making NAPEP a more permanent programme.

NAPEP implemented the participatory bottom-up approach in programme implementation and monitoring and also provided a rational framework, which lays emphasis on appropriate and sustainable institutional arrangement while maintaining inter-ministerial and inter-agency co-operation. It provided capacity building in form of educational trainings and youth empowerment (Orji, 2005).

Under NAPEP, the relevant government institutions carried out poverty eradication activities as Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) and Natural Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). The Youth Empowerment Scheme dealt with Educational. capacity acquisition programmes, credit delivery and enterprises promotion while RIDS concerned itself with putting the right utilities and infrastructures in place by providing portable drinking water, irrigation system, rural transportation, energy and power support. SOWESS on the other hand dealt with special education, primary health care, food security, micro and macro credit facilities and rural telecommunication. NRDCS had to do with land conservation and space, agricultural, water and solid minerals (Raheem et al., 2014) (Orji, 2005). Of all these programmes however, NAPEP's major success came under its Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) (Raheem et al., 2014). The outstanding performance of CAP YES by reason of their educational approach proves that educational aspect should be a major part of any intervention programme.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

Examination of certain indicators show that most poverty alleviation related interventions have had trifling impact in addressing the issues they were established to solve. There is a general consideration as to the fact that these measures were either poorly implemented or had no particular focus on the supposed target group (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005). Subsequent governments simply abandon intervention programmes initiated by their predecessors, thereby, introducing different ideas or no idea at all.

These became more ‘government specific’ because the concept of continuity of these projects was not accepted by successors who always had their own plans to execute. Within the frame work of potential efforts and strategies to boost employment and job creation, pedagogy inevitably creates the right platform for any intervention

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) appear to be the most successful interventions and are still functional to this day. Studies have shown that the success of these policies came by reason of the well-articulated pedagogical nature of these programmes.

Scholars pointed out pedagogy as the most important underlying factor that has constrained the effectiveness of many of these programmes. If the educational issues of these programmes are resolved, the programmes will be successful at the end, especially with the support and co-operation of the political powers. (Ajakaiye, 2003), (Jega, 2003), (Obadan, 1996).

When a poverty eradication programme is void of an effective pedagogical aspect, it is bound to fail notwithstanding the volume of resources invested in it. This study supports the education of the people as a more effective approach in national building programmes as it provides a platform on which they can also develop on their skills, broaden their knowledge through experience and be able to teach others as well.

Knowing fully well that one of the primary causes of poverty is lack of education, this work concludes by suggesting solutions. These solutions will come through the implementation of policies and programmes with great pedagogical dimensions that will be geared towards meaningful development and the meticulous implementation of projects by strong national institutions to ensure continuity after political tenures are over.

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