

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE IN TACKLING YOUTH POVERTY

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Abstract

Poverty, a global phenomenon that is dynamic, complex, and multi-dimensional is currently one of the most serious problems in the world. It is affecting young adults in many ways. Each country's definition of a young adult differs based on their exposure and how advanced the economy of the nation is. A young adult in the context of this paper is considered from 20 to 40 years. experiential education has been discovered as a way of alleviating poverty among young adults. So, this paper aims to explore poverty alleviation among young adults through experiential education. The finding shows that the risk of poverty has shifted from the elderly, those over the age of 65, to young adults, those between the ages of 18 and 25. Some causes of poverty among young adults discussed are economic, situational, social, demographic, and lastly political. The effects include lack of good health, a poor economy, and domestic challenges. Policies to promote poverty alleviation discussed include economic growth, equality distribution, creation of jobs, and education. The paper concluded that the fight against poverty must be everyone's responsibility especially leaders of the people. If at all it cannot be totally eradicated, it can be drastically reduced. It is however important for every government to put into place everything that will help the citizen to enjoy life especially the basic needs of life.

Keywords: Poverty, Education, Economic, Young Adults, United Nations

Introduction

Poverty is a sign of injustice which shows the inequality in humanity on all fronts. The concept of poverty may differ from one nation to another, but the centrality of it all is that poverty is against humanity. It is important to understand that poverty may be on the high side, not only because of the government of the day but lack of information. Contentment is a great virtue, living comfortably is also important, but most importantly the above mention is a right that belongs to every human.

The alarming situation is the concurrent poverty among young adult. Policies have been put into motion to eradicate or alleviate poverty, thinking that through several programs the effects of poverty will reduce gradually especially among young adult. According to a source, "The OECD is out with a new report on rising income inequality. The key finding that stands out, is that the risk of poverty has shifted from the elderly, those over the age of 65, to young adults, those between the ages of 18 and 25" (Income Inequality Update, June 2014). But the above statistic shows otherwise, it is then important to consider methods of approach to the course of alleviating poverty. The battle for the economic well-being of the citizen must be faced headlong by all, in order to have a better future and well deserving tomorrow for a young adult. The objective of the paper is to identify the concept

of poverty, identify causes and effects of poverty among young adult and to provide approaches to overcome poverty through experiential learning among the young adult.

The Concept of Poverty

The concept of poverty differs from one nation to the other depending on the infrastructures or policies put together by the leader. Poverty in a developing country will not be the same with a developed country, where programs or provision are made available for all citizenry; aged, unemployed, less privileged etc. According to Aigbokan (2007), "Poverty is defined today as a state of long-term deprivation of well-being, a situation considered inadequate for a decent living." This clearly shows that poverty is identifiable personally and collectively, if necessary, measures are put into motion.

Poverty is not only based on the amount of money one has in the account or the level of living in comparison to another. According to United Nation (n.d.), "Poverty is more than the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality." It is true that the whole world seems to be focusing on African as one of the nations of the world suffering from poverty, but of a truth, poverty is a global challenge facing both developed and underdeveloped countries depending on the angle of definition. Sundqvist (2009) suggests that "Poverty reduction is not only about meeting our basic needs, it is also about participation, influence, and power." There had been different concepts to poverty reduction, and until the application of the right measure is applied little or nothing will be accomplished.

Poverty is a state, where everything needed for life and wellbeing is missing without any hope of assistance. Poverty blurs the perspective and mindset of people, which may cripple every thought of being free. Poverty is beyond having no access to wellbeing, but it could also mean having no sufficient means to live the kind of life desired. The challenge of poverty will not have been a serious problem if its effect is only to a particular age limit but, also the young adult who seems to be the future leaders of the nation.

Forms of Poverty

There are different forms of poverty namely: Chronic or Generational, Transient and Absolute Poverty. Each is explained briefly below.

The first form is Chronic or Generational Poverty. In the words of Moore and Hulme (2005), poverty "is a phenomenon whereby an individual or group is in a state of poverty over an extended period of time." This is a more complicated form which if care and help are not given, it will cripple every member of the family and the children unborn. This is when poverty is handed over to individuals and families from generations before them. This type of poverty is usually difficult to escape because people who are trapped in it does not always have access to tools that will help them get out of it.

The second form is Transient Poverty. Hebel (Ed.) (2004) define Transient Poverty “as the component of time-mean consumption poverty at the household level that is directly attributable to variability in consumption; this can be thought of as a measure of vulnerability to falling consumption.” This is a temporary type of poverty that is based on the choice of diversity without considering the position of the access granted. Spending beyond the income received can bring anyone into this state of poverty position. It is the challenge of wrong choices.

The third form of poverty is Absolute Poverty. According to the United Nations (1995), "absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services." This type of poverty is common in some countries in Africa, where there is no provision for wellbeing. The citizenry is responsible for themselves and because of their little or no information at all, their possibility of survival especially during a shortage in natural provision like rain, water, etc. is very slim and famine could be the end result.

Young Adult and Poverty

Although, there are differs definition of young adult, and each definition has reasons for the terms and scope used in their definition. Each country’s definition differs one from another based on their exposure and how advanced the economy of the nation. From the community of the writers, a young adult will be better considered from 20 to 40 years.

Causes of Poverty Among Young Adults

Highlighting some causes of poverty among young adults will enhance the reader to either avoid or know how to maximize the opportunity that will help in reducing the chances of being affected by poverty. White & Killick (2001) provided four major causes of poverty which is very comprehensive and detail. Economic, Situational, Social and Demographic and lastly political. The ECONOMIC of a nation has a lot to do in the promotion of the citizen and this could result into the following: Low growth/productivity, slow job creation/capital intensity, inadequate productive assets, macro & market instability and inequalities of income and wealth. Countries today depend on each other to maintain economical sanity in their countries, which mean each country must be able to provide that which is needed to another which will bring about investors into their economy. Nigeria as a country is just coming out of an economic recession which has hampered the lifestyle of the citizen.

The second cause of poverty is SITUATIONAL, which focuses one’s location (remoteness, Poor region etc.), Environmental degradation and Proneness to shocks (disaster, AID). While SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC is the third cause of poverty which deals with the Household composition, Poor human capital: weak social services, Personal dependence (disablement, etc.) plus weak traditional safety nets, Gender Biases and Poverty- inducing social structures. Lastly, POLITIC is another cause of poverty. Every nation has a leader which sees to the affairs

of the citizen by making decisions on their behalf. This sometimes may result in War, instability, displacement, Disempowerment, social exclusion. This and much more are government failures.

Effects of Poverty Among Young Adults

There are different effects of poverty on the young adult. The most challenging of them all is unemployment. This has resulted in lack of good health because of not being able to meet up with demand from friends, family, society etc. This has resulted in the following: Restiveness- unable to keep still or silent; restless. This is a challenge faced with young adult living in poverty. Young adult, who are not helped through guidance will be exposed to different vices which can derail them from being a good citizen. These vices could sometime be very dangerous to their health and future. Another effect of poverty is social deficiency. In trying to maintain status quo, young adult put up a pretence, in order to give a positive opinion to others. There is also economic and domestic effect of poverty among young adults.

Poverty Alleviation

In fighting poverty, it is important to understand that every human has a right to life and wellbeing which qualifies them to have access to everything needed, that can also allow them to maximize their right. History had it that, the church was the only force fighting poverty in the early centuries before it becomes a social responsibility. The responsibility of the church to the poor was seen as an obligation unto the Lord, which has eternal value according to the biblical injunction.

Furthermore, Ogunleye (2006) posits that “Poverty, a global phenomenon that is dynamic, complex and multi-dimensional is currently one of the most serious problems in the world. In view of the above, efforts are being made to all government, the organized private sector, international donor agencies and NGOs to alleviate poverty so that man can live a meaningful life on the earth space.” It was discovered through study that the fight against poverty must be everyone’s responsibility especially leaders of the people. Poverty has become a global epidemic that must be confronted by all. Poverty alleviation targets to improve or better the quality of life for those people currently living in need. Another term that is commonly used for poverty alleviation is poverty reduction. It is important for every government to put into place everything that will help the citizen to enjoy life especially the basic needs of life. This will help to cultivate and maximize the potential of each citizen especially those who have special skills and talent that can be useful in putting the nation into the limelight among other developed countries of the world.

There had been different agencies that are committed to causing or seeing a reduction of poverty. The United Nations has been taking the bull by the horn by giving substantial financial grants to countries who seem to be affected most by poverty. This kind of grants helps in putting a needed infrastructural project that will enhance the citizen to better their lives. There are also other agencies that are placed under NGO’s (Non-Government Organizations). These agencies have their operation from the grassroots, which help them to see the core need of

the people, while the government goals are from the broader point of intervention. The progress recorded by United Nation was made possible by these agencies and grants released to countries who seem to be affected by poverty.

According to Pouw and Isa (2012), “The United Nation’s declaration of the right to development in 1986 and the United Nation Developmental Policies, stress that all people should be able to live under conditions that all of them to pursue their wellbeing. Whereas poverty reduction is part of the equation, so are the social and institutional processes that promote agency, formal and informal education, capabilities, intuitive dignities, innovation and cultural expression.” The concept of Poverty Alleviation is part of the human right declaration made by the United Nations, which practically made it an international goal that must be carried out by the leaders of every country for the betterment of their citizenry. Policies have been placed to monitor development and infrastructure among country members of United Nations.

Policies To Promote Poverty Alleviation Among Young Adult

1. Economic Growth

Economic growth is how much more the economy produces than it did in the prior period. To be accurate, the comparison of between the years must remove the effects of inflation. If the economy is progressive, businesses are more profitable and stock prices will definitely rise. This will give companies capital to invest and hire more employees. As more jobs are created, incomes rise. Consumers have more money to buy additional products and services. Purchases drive higher economic growth. For this reason, all countries want positive economic growth. This makes economic growth the most watched economic indicator.

Gross domestic product is the best way to measure economic growth. That's because it takes into account the country's entire economic output which includes all goods and services that businesses in the country produce for sale. It doesn't matter whether they are sold domestically or overseas. It includes exports because they are produced in the country while imported are subtracted from economic growth.

2. Equality Distribution

This is another policy to poverty alleviation. The government has a responsibility here in making equate proportion of governmental benefit to irrespective of location or influence. The government using this policy will have to put up everything; infrastructures, industries, manufacturing companies, etc. in place for every citizen of the country. Influence of power will not be an access to multiply wealth but one’s ability to work

3. Creation of Jobs Opportunity

Karnani (2007) opined, “The best way to alleviate poverty is to increase the income of the poor by providing productive employment. It is necessary to view the poor as producers and emphasize buying from them.” To escape from poverty, the poor need productive jobs that lead to higher income. Karnani (2007) continued to say, “At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the international community, under the leadership of the United Nations,

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adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The first MDG focuses on the eradication of poverty and hunger. Following the widespread conviction that poverty can only be reduced if people have decent and productive jobs, a new target was added under MDG 1 in 2006: achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.” One of the most effective ways of confronting poverty is for every government to create a new job for the unemployed workforce.

4. Education

According to Dewey “Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves.” One of the ways to have a sustainable economic growth is education. Education is a major key factor to reduce and prevent poverty.

Countries around the world are now maximizing the importance of education and are investing in it significantly. Making education available to 100 percent of people around the world is one way to ensure that poverty declines. There are two forms of education; Formal and Informal setting. The formal education takes place in a class with an organized curriculum while informal education is not in an organized form which can be done anywhere without any curriculum. The experience gathered in any form of education must have a formative effect on the patterns of living which may be considered educational. Promoting Poverty reduction among young adult also must be done through informal education. This type of education is done through intra-personal learning, which practically involves the instructor but most especially the student.

Experiential Learning and Poverty Alleviation Among Young Adult

It has been established that Poverty is on the increase among young adult, and in order to see to the reduction of this epidemic growing among young. It is then important to put into place definite policies that will enhance or empower the young adult to see poverty alleviation as a reality and be empowered with necessary information to overcome it.

What is Experiential Learning? It is a learning through action, learning by doing, learning through one’s experience, and learning through discovery. The concept of this learning is to move from the cognitive type of learning, which has to do with memorization to education which focuses on problem-solving and critical thinking. The most important key in this type of learning is not the teacher, coming to teach that which he read, but the student, whereas the knowledge gained must be put into use personally, then we say that learning has taken place. Experiential learning involves step by step learning which helps the student to have a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience which helps them to “fully learn new skills and knowledge” (Haynes, 2007). This type of Learning is successful by paying attention to the process and not the content of the lesson. During each

step of the experience, students will engage with the content, the instructor, each other as well as self-reflect and apply what they have learned in another situation.

1. Maximizing Skills Ability

Education, vocational training, and lifelong learning are central pillars of employability. Employment of workers and sustainable enterprise development within the decent Work Agenda. Skills development is key in stimulating a sustainable development process which can make a contribution to facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Skills development is also essential to addressing the opportunities and challenges to meet new demands of changing economies and new technologies in the context of globalization. The principles and values of decent work provide guidance for the design and delivery of skills development and are an effective way of efficiently managing socially just transitions. There is an individual who has the inbuilt potential for skills and craftsmanship. Experiential education will help in packaging their concept into an international idea, which will help in becoming an employer of labour. The churches have taken the initiative of empowering the youth by being involved in the acquisition of skills like craftsmanship, information technology, etc.

2. Creating a Networking Platform

One of the things that enhance young adult is information and this can be done through getting a right platform for information. The platform can be referred to as Networking. According to Smith (2007), "It is far less important what you know than who knows you! And it is crucial that when you are seeking, purpose (because you represent, the mission you're on etc.) that they think first of you, instead of another solution to their problem or cause in which they could invest their time, money and or energy." Networking is a means of personal branding of one idea and goal for other to see and invest in it. Networking is one of an essential career development and job search tools that are often overlooked by students and job hunters.

Networking involves developing and maintaining connections with individuals, then mutually benefitting from this developed relationship. In relation to career development, a well-developed network provides you with a support system of individuals who can provide meaningful assistance to you as it may relate to your career/industry exploration, connections to other individuals and learning about potential job openings. Networking should be approached as an ongoing process that takes time and nurturing, and not something you do just when you are looking for a job. It is important to remember that networking is a two-way process in which you provide beneficial support to those in your network as well.

3. Organizing Informative Program

Apart from creating a platform for networking, it is also important to help a young adult to change their mindset from negativity to positivity and to opportunities around them. Of a truth, this seminar should be characterized

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on how to maximize their potential and also believe in themselves which will enhance them to release some belief or schools of thought that may be affecting them in putting in their best in whatever they desire to do. It is also important to showcase personnel who had been the same situation to share their success story. This encounter will introduce a young adult to believe in themselves and to persist in whatever choice of career. Introducing them to read the autobiography of people who had made it in life through hard work and craftsmanship. In the process of reading, the ideal will be recreated and passion will come alive. 4. *Re-Educating the Mind*

There is a quote attributed to Aristotle, "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." The status of education is diminishing compare to early years, where the home and school are complementing them in educating a student. But the focus or responsibility is now more on the school while the parent has left their role to the teachers and the child. This kind of exposure has made education to be half-baked which has made our young adult be exposed to some erroneous idea about life. Experiential learning will help in re-engineering the young adult from known to the unknown, where principles of life and experience can be put together to reeducate their mind and straighten their school of thought.

Conclusion

The natural provision of the creator is enough for all, but bad leadership and selfish policies have positioned the nation of the world in absolute poverty. The wealth of the nation is in the hand of a few, and the young adult after education still remain unemployed. The fight against poverty must not be left in hand of the government but a responsibility of all. Young adult must care for and prepare for the future by enjoying the benefits of the nation to the fullest. So that, good governance can be a heritage to generation to come beyond now. The government, church, Nongovernment organization must put in their best to maximize the young adult potential to the fullest. Education is a must for transformation among young adult and the kind of education needed is more than formal or classroom education but the inclusion of informal education. Taking it from known to unknown. Experiential learning will enhance effective learning among young adult. Creating a platform for networking, encouraging them to participate or maximize their skill acquisition and much more. In the process of reducing poverty, it is then necessary to take the bull by the horn by introducing poverty alleviate policies into the curriculum of education, so that the battle against poverty will be from the grassroots.

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