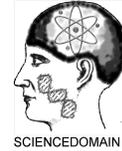


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Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Ondo and Osun States of Nigeria: New Skills and Knowledge Acquired as a Result of Participation

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Author's contribution

This whole work was carried out by the author EOA.

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this study is to evaluate the effect of new skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of their participation in the poverty alleviation programmes of the National Fadama Development Project III and the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Programmes.

Study Design: This study adopted a descriptive research design.

Place of Study: A total of 150 beneficiaries comprising 70 FADAMA III and 80 JDPC beneficiaries selected purposively from Ondo and Osun were picked for the study.

Methodology: A self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. This was "Questionnaire for the beneficiaries of Fadama III and JDPC programmes (QBFJ)". The QBFJ was designed to gather information on the skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries. Data were analyzed using percentage and chi-square statistics.

Results: The study indicated that seven new skills were acquired by the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries also acquired knowledge on ten different types of management programmes. The result further revealed that skills acquired by the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes were significantly influenced by their gender ($\chi^2 = 39.93$, $p < 0.05$), Bees keeping was the major skill acquired with 60% of the beneficiaries while 66.7% acquired knowledge on tree crops management.

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Conclusion: This study has established that good implementation of poverty alleviation programmes will improve the standard of living of the beneficiaries. Poverty incidence can thus become reduced with increased investment in people, improving their quality and enhancing their employment prospects. It is recommended that priorities for reform should include emphasizing investment in basic education, working to improve social equity in educational provision and encouraging vocational education and training.

Keywords: Beneficiaries; poverty alleviation; questionnaire; skills and knowledge; descriptive research design.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty can be defined based on two main perspective: “Moneylessness” and “powerlessness”. “Moneylessness” which means an insufficiency of cash and chronic inadequacy of resources of all types to satisfy basic human needs, such as, nutrition, rest, warmth and body care; and “powerlessness” meaning those who lack the opportunities and choices open to them and whose lives seem to them to be governed by forces and persons outside their control [1]. Poverty encompasses inadequate income and denial of the basic necessities such as education, health services, clean water and sanitation [2]. It is characterized by lack of purchasing power, exposure to risk, malnutrition, high mortality rate, low life expectancy, insufficient access to social and economic services and few opportunities for income generation. Poverty has no geographical boundary. It is seen in the North, West, South and East. It is found in rural as well as urban areas of Nigeria. Though the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is much higher in the rural areas than in the urban centres, the urban slum-dwellers form one of the more deprived groups. Combination of several complex factors contributes to poverty. They include low or negative economic growth, inappropriate macroeconomic policies, deficiencies in the labour market resulting in limited job growth, low productivity and low wages in the informal sector and a lag in human resource development [3]. It is also an outcome of inefficient use of common resources. This may result from weak policy environment, inadequate infrastructure, weak access to technology, credit etc. Also, it can be due to certain groups using certain mechanisms in the system to exclude “problem groups” from participating in economic development, including the democratic process [4]. Lack of employable skills is no doubt considered as contributing factor to the problem of poverty in Nigeria. This is because, the educational system operated at post-independence era in the country placed emphasis on liberal education rather than on acquisition of skills, which should prepare the individual for better employment opportunities.

In other words, the then system focused on and produced school leavers and graduates without relevant vocational skills that could enable them to be self-reliant. Adebayo [5] rightly observed the subsequent increase in population which necessitates establishment of more schools and higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. This in turn produces school leavers and graduates, whose numbers are always on the increase year after year without commensurate provision of employment opportunities both in the public and private sectors.

The term “Poverty alleviation” represents the attempt to reduce the incidence of poverty in the country [6]. Attempts at tackling the problem of poverty in Nigeria have been going on for a long time. The government have made several attempts to address the problem of poverty which have often been focused on rural communities given the fact that majority of Nigerians reside in the rural areas. The major efforts made in the pre-independence and the

early days of independent Nigeria according to Omale and Molem [7] were in the area of farm settlement schemes. The aim of these farm settlement schemes was to bring scattered small communities together so that they could take advantage of economies of scale in farm inputs, agro services, marketing, etc. these schemes recorded little or no achievement because those affected were not involved at the planning stage.

Ondo and Osun States have been able to implement different poverty alleviation programmes either in collaboration with the Federal Government, state owned poverty alleviation programmes or through Non-Governmental organizations. Among the Federal government programmes has been the Fadama III poverty alleviation programmes. The National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP III) otherwise known as Fadama III was designed by the World Bank and the Federal Government to accelerate the development of lands using small scale irrigation development approach. Each state is not allowed to involve more than 20 local government areas in the programme. "Fadama" is a Hausa name for irrigable land. The Yoruba name for Fadama is "Akuro". Usually Fadama are flood plains and low-lying areas underlined by shallow aquifers and found along Nigeria's major river systems. Fadama lands are especially suitable for crop irrigation and fishing, traditionally provide feed resources and water for livestock.

The Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), is a faith-based Non-Governmental, no-political, not-for-profit and charity organization, established in 1995. As the social arm of the Catholic Church, it provides services on democracy and governance, Human rights education, sustainable rural and community development, integrated human development, preventive health awareness (especially HIV/AIDs). Care of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), entrepreneurship development, women empowerment and youth development, promotion of social justice, legal aid, microfinance, peace building, as well as conflict resolution and management. Thus, the vision of JDPC is to see all human beings, especially the poor and the less privileged live the fullness of life willed for them by God their creator in joy and peace, while the goal is to promote actions for justice and peace, holistic human development and participation in the transformation of the world.

The training or capacity programmes being offered by the Fadama III and Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) are forms of adult education programmes in which all the participants desired changes from lack of skills, knowledge, attitude and economic status which initially made them to be poor. Knowles [8] emphasizes that the final measure of value of adult education programme is in the actual changes in behaviour that helps beneficiaries to accomplish in relation to their needs and interests. Therefore, considering the view of needs and interests of individual, it is necessary to look at the different needs of beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes just as Knowles [8] had said no two different adults will need the same thing. Gough [9], discussed the subject of human needs in the context of social assistance. Doyal and Gough (1991) also published a book 'A Theory of Human Need', in which their view goes beyond the emphasis on psychology but said an individual's needs are representative of the costs of being human within society. A person who does not have his or her needs fulfilled, that is, a "needy" person will function poorly in the society [10]. Adesanya [11], explains UNESCO's definition of adult education as basic education is all forms of organized education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and life-skills, values and attitudes that they require to survive, develop their capacity, live and work in dignity, and improve the quality of their lives. It means, the main function of any adult education enterprise is to assist adults to increase competence, or negotiate transitions, in their social roles, to help them gain greater fulfillment in their personal lives, and to assist

them in solving personal and community problems, in which poverty has been regarded as both personal and community problems. Thus, Fadama III and JDPC training programmes are put in place to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. Therefore, adult education will guide an individual or community to identify their basic needs before progressing or engaging in the acquisition of skill or knowledge in poverty alleviation programme. One of the main causes of poverty has been attributed to lack of marketable skills or insufficient knowledge in one's area of specialization. Many people lack skills, while some are having outdated skills or even not relevant to the present situation in Nigeria. People need to upgrade themselves in their areas of specialization, while it is dangerous to focus on one skill as a source of income. According to Mitra [12], the purpose of any skill building effort should improve the social capital that the informal sector workers possess into economic benefit. Therefore, training especially for skill acquisition has to be as an input for empowerment and not just for employment.

Thus, the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes are in need of different programmes depending on their tastes, their environment or the common agreement of the community. Need is important in the selection and execution of any programme, it may be necessary at times to make use of opportunity cost in the selection of any programme under the monitoring of an adult educator or facilitator. Moreover, a person in a situation of need experiences insecurity, marginality, and inequality. The situation to need, because it implies necessary and essential values, requires an adopted or appropriate solution to narrow or eliminate the gap. A person who has not reached an acceptable minimal level experiences a situation of handicap. Needs must always be recognized and dealt with in some form and to some degree. Changes that are important to people are those which help them meet their needs for biological, economic, social, esthetic, or moral well-being. The element of needs, therefore, becomes a central concern of the adult educator [13]. To identify and evaluate people's needs, adult educator must understand the nature and role of needs in the training programmes or any form of assistance. On this point, writers advance a wide range of concept of need. Some stress biological needs, others emphasize spiritual, social, individual, group, basic, education, economic, unfelt, felt, community and many other identifiable uses of the term "need". Common, however, in all of these ways of referring to the phenomena is the fact that they each relate to the content or object of need. One of the most profound discoveries of this country about the nature of man is that the laissez-faire approach to both economic and social development will not do the job, leaving people to their own initiative and resources is not enough. External stimuli must be used to activate people's natural tendencies to improve themselves and their living conditions. Individuals in poverty ridden environment lack the necessary skills, or have skills that are outdated or of little relevance to present conditions. Furthermore, they have little to depend on, other than their own physical strength. Learning by doing is a common practice from an early age. Breman [14]. Points out, non-specialization, avoiding concentrating on a single trade is the most commendable strategy for those who exist on the broad "underside" of the labour hierarchy. The art of survival requires constant search for new source of income and the will and ability to be as flexible as possible. The family, the household, the neighbours and the community are of central importance for securing basic survival needs through diverse and often complex livelihood strategies. Indeed, the critical purpose of any training and skill-building effort has to be to convert the social capital that the informal sector workers possess into economic benefit.

Thus, the sum of an individual's knowledge, skill and attitudes is his or her competence as believes competence is much more than the linear, sequential acquisition of a narrow set of job-related skills and the ability to carry out specific tasks in a single workplace. Today's

world of work calls for individuals who are able to apply their knowledge in different contexts and under varying technological conditions and to respond interpedently and creatively.

1.1 Objective

Identify the new skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries as a result pf participation in poverty alleviation programmes.

1.2 Research Question

What are the new skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of participating in poverty alleviation programmes in Ondo and Osun States of Nigeria?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between skills acquired by the beneficiaries and their gender.

1.4 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprised 150 beneficiaries of Fadma III and JDPC programmes from Ondo and Osun States.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research which involved the collection of data from the beneficiaries. The research sample comprised 150 beneficiaries of Fadama III and JDPC programmes randomly selected Ondo and Osun states irrespective of their gender. The reasons for choosing one hundred and fifty respondents was because not all the beneficiaries of these programmes could be contacted at the period of this research work as a result of the large population of the beneficiaries.

A close ended questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The questionnaire were distributed personally by the researcher to the respondents according to their programmes. Their gender and type of new skills and knowledge acquired were categorized on the questionnaire. The participants were asked to select "Yes" or "No" for their answers. The data was analyzed using percentage to determine the results for the new skills and knowledge acquired.

To test the hypothesis, the identified skills acquired by the sampled beneficiaries were sorted into male and female categorical group. The identified skills as a categorical variable were cross-tabulated with gender of the beneficiaries as another categorical variable so as to generate chi-square analysis which was carried out to determine whether skills acquired was independent of gender.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Question 1

What are the new skills acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of participating in poverty alleviation programmes?

In order to answer the research question on the new skills acquired by the beneficiaries, seven different skills were categorized in the Questionnaire for Beneficiaries of Fadama III and JDPC (QBFJ). "YES" and "NO" options were used in classifying the beneficiaries. The responses of the beneficiaries were analyzed using simple percentage. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of new skills acquired by the beneficiaries through functional literacy of Fadama III and JDPC programmes

Skills acquired by the beneficiaries	Total number sampled	Number of beneficiaries distribution	% of beneficiaries
Bees keeping	150	90	60
Beads making	150	89	59.3
Preparation of kerosene soap solution	150	82	54.7
Slain weed soap solution	150	79	52.7
Indigenous pest and fungi control method	150	80	53.3
Reading skills	150	52	34.7
Drawing skills	150	48	32

Source: Fadama III and JDPC offices in Ondo and Osun state

Table 1 indicates that from a population of 150 beneficiaries, 60% of them revealed that they acquired skills on Bees keeping, while 59.3% reported that they acquired skills on Beads making. It was also revealed that 54.7% acquired skills on the preparation of Kerosene Soap Solution, and that 53.3% acquired skills on Indigenous Pest and Fungi Control method. Furthermore, seventy nine of the beneficiaries, representing 52.7% revealed that they acquired skills on preparation of Slain Weed Soap Solution, while 34.7% and 32% of the respondents indicated they acquired Reading and Drawing skills respectively. From the above analysis, it was evident that the most acquired skills by the beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes were on keeping of Bees and Beads making.

3.2 Research Question 2

What are the new knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of participating in poverty alleviation programmes?

In order to answer the research question on new knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries, the type of new knowledge acquired were categorized on the Questionnaire for Beneficiaries of Fadama III and JDPC (QBFJ) programmes. The beneficiaries were asked to select "Yes or No option for their answers. The responses of the beneficiaries were analyzed using simple percentage. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 shows that out of a population of 150 beneficiaries, 66.7% of the participants revealed that they acquired knowledge on tree crops management. The beneficiaries who indicated acquisition of knowledge on integrated pest management were 58.7%. Also, 58% of the beneficiaries reported that they acquired knowledge on animal integration, while the respondents who indicated that they acquired knowledge on soil and water conservation and soil fertility measures were 56.7%. It was also revealed that 53.3% and 55.3% respectively acquired knowledge on reforestation and on post harvesting management. Furthermore, while a total of 52.7% of the respondents indicated they acquired new knowledge on small scale business management, 52% of the beneficiaries disclosed that they acquired new knowledge through farmer's initiatives method. Lastly, the remaining 50.7% and 49.3% indicated they acquired new knowledge on record and book keeping, and modern oil processing respectively. From the above, it was revealed that tree crops management and integrated pests management were the most acquired knowledge by the beneficiaries of Fadama III and JDPC programmes.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of new knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries during Fadama III and JDPC programmes

Types of knowledge acquired	Total number sampled	Beneficiaries' distribution	Percentage (%)
Tree crops management	150	100	66.7
Integrated pest management	150	88	58.7
Animal integration	150	87	58
Soil and water conservation and soil fertility measure	150	85	56.7
Post harvesting management	150	83	55.3
Reforestation	150	80	53.3
Small scale business management	150	79	52.7
Farmers initiatives	150	78	52
Record and book keeping	150	76	50.7
Modern oil processing	150	74	49.3

Source: Fadama III and JDPC offices in Ondo and Osun State

3.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between skills acquired by the beneficiaries and their gender.

Table 3. Chi-square analysis showing the relationship between skills acquired and gender

Skills acquired	Gender	
	Male	Female
Bees keeping	51(56.6%)	39(43.3%)
Beads making	33(37.07%)	56(62.92%)
Preparation of kerosene soap solution	62(75.6%)	20(24.4%)
Slain weed soap solution	60(79.4%)	19(24.05%)
Indigenous pest and fungi control methods	50(62.5%)	30(37.5%)
Reading skills	28(53.8%)	24(46.15)
Drawing skills	23(47.91)	25(52.08)
X ²	39.93	
P	<0.05	

Source: Fadama III and JDPC offices in Ondo and Osun States

Table 3 presents the number of male and female beneficiaries that acquired each of the skills identified. It could be observed in the tables that while 19.9% of the male acquired skills in bees keeping, 43.3 of their female counterpart indicated the acquisition of bees keeping. Furthermore, while 62.92% of the female acquired beads making only 37.07% of the male acquired beads making skill. The Table 3 also presented the number of the male beneficiaries that acquired each of slain weed soap solution and preparation of kerosene soap solution respectively to be 79.4 % and 75.6 %. Summarily, it could be seen in Table 3 that while a higher percentage of male beneficiaries were found to have acquired skills in preparation of kerosene soap solution and slain weed soap solution, a higher percentage of the female beneficiaries were also seen to have acquired some other skills like Beads making and Bees keeping. The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 39.93$, $p < .05$) is an indication that there is a significant relationship between beneficiaries' gender and skills acquired. Thus, skills acquired by beneficiaries of PAP significantly depend on gender and as a matter of fact, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has established that poverty alleviation programmes if well implemented will improve the standard of living of the beneficiaries. The participants engaged themselves in different skills and knowledge of their areas of interest which improved their standard of living; as one of the challenges facing the poor in Nigeria today is lack of employable skills. Therefore, after their different trainings, their products were of good standard and were able to meet the needs of the society. This enabled them to provide good services and also sell their products at reasonable prices which improved their standard of living. The different skills provided by organizers of these poverty alleviations programmes did not discriminate in the choice of their training, thus giving the participants irrespective of gender equal opportunities to be involved in any programme of their interest.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Poverty incidence can thus become reduced with increased investment in people, improving their quality and enhancing their employment prospects. Even for those underemployed, more education and training could be an avenue to increase earning and consequently poverty elimination. If the issue of poverty alleviation is to be addressed in any meaningful way in Nigeria, educational policy reforms are needed. Priorities for reform should include:

- Emphasizing investment in basic education
- Working to improve social equity in educational provision and
- Encouraging vocational education and training.

In the height of these priorities, the cuts in education expenditure as a result of the country's adjustment efforts need to be reversed. In particular, massive investment in both primary and secondary education is necessary to meet the challenges of poverty and would yield the highest social rates of return for our developing nation. Also, the government should understand that vocational education and training are crucial to the development of technical skills for economic growth. Government should assume a central role in this respect, particularly for the poor and educationally disadvantaged. Government need not take sole responsibility for the provision of vocational training, individual and non-governmental organizations can be encouraged to participate in this type of training by providing technical support and materials through training agencies. There is therefore the need for re-

orientation of the need for this set of people outside there to learn one form of marketable skill so as to alleviate their suffering. Since poverty alleviation programmes creates room for changes after empowerment, members of the public are therefore advised to participate in any poverty alleviation programme being organized by individuals, religious, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The organizers of these programmes are advised to focus and allow the full participation of the targeted groups so as to benefit from the programmes. Gender should not be seen as a form of barrier for participants in any poverty alleviation programme.

CONSENT

Not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Not applicable.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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