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**BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY IN TARABA STATE THROUGH EDUCATION:
TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE UN’S FIRST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL – NO
POVERTY BY 2030**

BY

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A Final Thesis Presented to

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APPROVAL

This thesis has been read and approved as meeting the requirement for the award of Master’s Degree in Human Development, of the School of Social and Human Sciences, Atlantic International University, Honolulu, USA.

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Advisor.....Sign.....Date.....

Academic Dean.....Sign.....Date.....

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late dad, Mr. Ferdinand Patrick Nyameh. His dedication to his teaching profession earned him the name “Teacher”. He gave to us his children the valuable gift of education. May God grant to him eternal rest. Amen

DECLARATION

I, Charles Nzasibenvo Nyameh, hereby certify that this work is research carried out by me and to the best of my knowledge, is not a reproduced copy of any existing work. All materials used are duly acknowledged by way of references.

.....
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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation:	Meaning:
AATF	African Agriculture Technology Foundation
ABP	Anchors Borrowers Programme
ADPs	Assistance to the Agricultural Development Programs
AFGEAN	Agricultural Fresh Produce Growers and Exporters Association of Nigeria
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
BVN	Bank Verification Number
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease-2019
DFIs	Development Finance Institutions
DMBs	Deposit Money Banks
EIGs	Economic Interest Groups
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FMHADMSD	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development
FUGs	Fadama Users Groups
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFBs	Microfinance Banks
NAFDAC	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control
NBTE	National Board for Technical Education
NEPC	Nigerian Export Promotion Council
NHGSFP	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
NIBS	Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement Systems
NIS	Nigeria Immigration Service
NUC	National University Commission
NVRC	National Varieties Release Committee
NYSC	National Youth Service Scheme
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
SEEDAN	Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria
SETE	Student's Evaluation of Teachers Effectiveness

SKYE	Skills Development for Youth Empowerment
SSG	Secretary to the State Government
TSU	Taraba State University
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
WASCE	West African School Certificate Examination
WFP	World Food Programme
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity

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CHAPTER ONE (1): Introduction

1.1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of poverty, sometimes in its extreme form, is evident in many parts of the world. It is estimated that almost a billion people across the globe live in extreme poverty. It is also commonly agreed that global poverty has powerful levers such as most of the worlds poor are subsistence farmers, humanity knows the tools and services with which it can end poverty, and that the delivery of these tools and services to farmers can substantially combat or end poverty.

Taraba State which is in the Northeast of Nigeria covers a total of 54,473 Km² of land area. The major occupation of the people is agriculture and other primary activities like fishing, pottery, cloth weaving, dyeing, mat making, wood carving, embroidery, and blacksmithing. The land is naturally good for agriculture with good weather for maximum agricultural yields. It is, therefore, no surprise that the state is nicknamed, “Nature’s Gift to the Nation”. Despite these enormous potentials of the state, Taraba and Sokoto state scandalously had the largest percentage of people living below the poverty line in a statistic conducted in 2019 among the 36 States of Nigeria.

There is no doubt that such a situation in Taraba state will reinforce the cycle of poverty to be passed on from parents to their children and to subsequent generations too. It is, therefore, necessary to take concrete steps or measures to break such cycle of poverty. A portent tool in such a fight is education. And the education envisaged here is both formal and informal. The farmers should be given some basic education on various modern methods and skills of farming for better yields and economic empowerment. The children of the farmers and those on the margins of society should also be given equal access to free or affordable and qualitative education for better job opportunities. These steps will be crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty in families and even in the communities at large.

1.2. WHAT IS POVERTY?

Though revolving around the same focal points, poverty has been described variously by different persons or groups. Poverty is a situation in which a person or community is bereft of the financial resources and essentials for a minimum living standard. A popular Nigerian comedian nicknamed Destalker defines poverty as one’s inability to afford one’s needs (Oghenebrorhie). Poverty has also been described as a deprivation due to lack of resources, both material and non-material e.g., income, housing, health, education, knowledge, and culture¹ (Protection)

It requires a threshold to measure poverty and each nation or state may have its own threshold that determines how many of its people are living in poverty. It is, however, generally agreed that people or families living on \$1 or less per day are deemed to be living in extreme poverty; majority of whom are domiciled among peasant or subsistence farmers. Even though so much has been done in the last century to reduce global poverty, so many efforts are still needed in order to achieve the UN’s first Sustainable Development Goal – No Poverty by 2030. This can be an achievable target with the will and commitment and the application of the right strategies to target persons and communities.

1.3. WHAT IS THE CYCLE OF POVERTY?

At the onset of 2020, Concern Worldwide US says that Just over 588 million, approximately 7.7% of the global population lives in extreme poverty that is, living on \$1.90 per day which is below the international poverty benchmark. This means that these people have a lack of basic assets and/or do not see a return on the assets they have. For most people this forms a cycle of poverty²

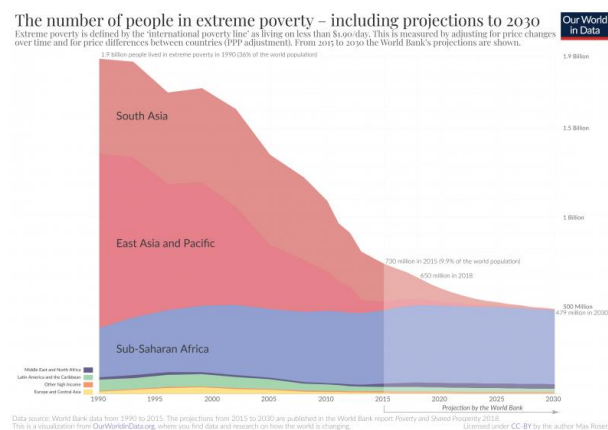
¹ Protection, D. o. (n.d.). Retrieved 12 28, 2021, from <https://www.socialinclusion.ie/poverty.html>

² Foundation, R. (n.d.). Retrieved 12 28, 2021, from <https://www.right2learnfoundation.org/how-does-education-help-children-break-the-cycle-of-poverty/>

A child born into a family that is poor is likely to inherit the poverty of his parents and grandparents, unless better opportunities are available to the child to break that cycle of poverty. Where such opportunities are lacking, poverty in such a family or community becomes endemic or a cycle. Such a family or community have few or no resources or opportunities to improve their economic status, leaving them entirely at the mercy or firm grip of poverty.

The World Vision California defines the cycle of poverty as “...A phenomenon where poor families become impoverished for at least three generations” (Foundation). Such families will have problems or issues such as malnutrition, high rate of illness, inability to get access to schools or good schools, inadequate or lack of healthcare, increasing the risks of mortality rates, etc. Sometimes it takes just one member of a family or community to get the necessary education and opportunity that would enable that person break the cycle of poverty in that family or community; the journey of a thousand miles, it is said, begins with a step.

1.4. HOW EXTENSIVE IS POVERTY IN THE WORLD?



Accessed: 20 June, 2021.

The global estimate of people living in extreme poverty stands at about 1 billion; majority of these people are subsistence farmers. This is a significant number but it is not an entirely hopeless scenario. Despite this staggering figure or estimate, it is heart-warming to know that tremendous progress has been achieved in the fight against global poverty. On a positive note, it is worth knowing that about 1.2 billion people have been lifted from extreme poverty since 1990. We now have about 9.2% of the world living on \$1.90 a day compared to the nearly 36% in 1990 (Vision, 2022). Africa in particular has gone from pre-medieval situation to a very decent situation with stable functional governments in the last 50 years in most parts.

In the last two years, however, this tremendous progress has witnessed a major obstacle – the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has since impacted negatively on the economies of countries across the globe. The many restrictions by countries to contain the spread of the virus led to huge job losses especially among low-income earners. The World Bank estimates that a further increase of about 88 million to 115 million people will fall into extreme poverty in 2020 and that

could rise to as many as 150 million in 2021. Containing the spread of the virus has been a herculean task for most governments in the world. The emergence of many variants of the virus (the latest being the omicron), the unequal distribution of vaccines among nations, the vaccine hesitancy among a significant group (especially in Africa), the conspiracy theories among ‘pro-vaccers’ and ‘anti-vaccers’, etc makes the fight against this global pandemic even more complex.

Ending poverty is not a mission impossible as humanity certainly knows the tools with which to end poverty, as long as there is a will and sincere commitment towards this noble cause. With a combined effort from one and all, setting aside a good capital for the delivery of the necessary tools to target persons or communities, adequate training and re-training of grassroots facilitators, the fight against poverty is winnable.

1.5. WHY DID THE UN CHOOSE “NO POVERTY” AS THE FIRST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL?

It is much easier to deal with the theoretical concept of poverty than its practical reality. Those who formulate policies about the fight against poverty need to have some personal encounter with those who are really living in poverty for a better understanding and action. A person or family said to be living in poverty is barely surviving. Besides some of the not-too-needed luxuries of life, basic human needs centre around: decent meals or food, good healthcare, quality education, shelter, decent clothes, etc. Where there is poverty, there is hunger and all manners of deprivations or lack. Many persons or families in the world wake up each day unsure of where and how to get their next meal. Children especially need food to grow physically and mentally; there is even a connection between a good meal and a healthy body and mind. A quote attributed generally to Hippocrates says, “Eat food as your medicines or you will eat medicines as your food” (Food, 2021)

There are so many malnourished children all over the world that are not only denied great opportunities or have their potentials thwarted, but some of them may die before reaching the age of five. No one really deserves to die of hunger as the world has more than enough to go round. There is certainly no need to waste food when so many others are in need of food. Even Jesus was opposed to the culture of food wastage; after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand people recorded in the Bible, he ordered that the leftovers be collected. The leftovers collected filled twelve baskets (John 6:13).

Where there is poverty, many children cannot have access to education or quality education. This is because their parents will not be able to pay their fees or tuition for the tertiary students. This situation is worsened by the failure of many governments in developing nations to provide free or at least affordable and quality education for their citizens. In such situations quality education is only guaranteed for the children of parents who are able to afford the exorbitant school fees or tuition of their children in private schools or universities.

Where there is poverty, many children do not have access to decent shelter and clothes; there are no good rooms to sleep in, no toilets (often relying on open defecation), no decent mattresses to sleep on (many sleeping on mats or literally on the bare floor), no mosquito nets to help curtail the spread of malaria, etc. These situations definitely expose these children to a lot of health risks; and with no adequate healthcare systems, some of them may even die. If these deprivations or lack of basic necessities of life are necessarily linked to poverty, it is obvious to see why the UN had to choose “No Poverty” as its first sustainable development goal. People, especially children need to first survive, be healthy and be educated if there is to be any meaningful future for them and the society at large. It is certainly more hopeful and gratifying that this first UN’s sustainable development goal came with a mission statement, “Ending extreme poverty by 2030”. All that is left is a committed and prompt implementation of the necessary policies and programs with the right strategies to the target or affected persons or communities.

1.6. TARABA STATE RATED AMONG THE TWO STATES IN NIGERIA WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PERSONS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE IN A STATISTICS IN 2019

Nigeria has a total of 36 states and a Federal Capital, Abuja. In a national statistic carried out by “Statista”, Taraba and Sokoto states ranked as the two states which house the largest percentage of people living below the poverty line. The lowest poverty rates were recorded in the South and South Western states; in Lagos for instance, the figure rated to 4.5% which was the lowest rate in the country.

A person or even a family in Nigeria is considered poor if that person or the family lives below \$361 per annum. It is estimated that in 2019 when this statistic was carried out, about 40.1% of Nigeria’s population lived in poverty. (Varrella, 2021)

It is no accident that Taraba state is nicknamed “Nature’s Gift to the Nation”; the vast arable land mass with a good weather, the huge untapped mineral deposits in the state, the huge tourism potentials in the state, etc account for some reasons why Taraba state ought not to have such a negative outlook economically. This poor rating in this statistic is among my major motivation for the title of my final thesis. Taraba state ought to be among the major economic hubs in Nigeria. If the government of Taraba state with some collaboration from wealthy individuals or groups could harness these huge potentials in the state, things will certainly turn around for the better not only for the citizens but for the nation as a whole. The pictures below are a few examples of some precious stones that locals in the last place I worked (Monkin village in Zing Local Government Area, Taraba State) locally dig out from the area.



There is also no doubt that at the heart of the driving force towards harnessing the huge agricultural potentials, mineral deposits and tourism potentials in the state is delivering an affordable, accessible and quality education to the citizens at all levels.

CHAPTER TWO (2): Description

2.1. WHY IS EDUCATION KEY IN BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY IN TARABA STATE?

Though it cannot be automatically presupposed that all those who are not formally educated live in poverty, the pre-eminence of education in the global fight against poverty in general, and in Taraba state in particular cannot be overemphasized. Knowledge, whether formally or informally acquired, it is said, is power. There is a high possibility that children who are educated will have better chances and opportunities to a variety of jobs than those children who are not. It is when children have such better opportunities that they are able to break the cycle of poverty in their families and communities at large. When given the right knowledge and equipped with the various skills, people are able to help themselves and even others; people and families do not just have to barely survive but thrive.

UNESCO estimates that if all students especially in developing countries had basic reading skills with nothing else, about 171 million people could exit the margins of extreme poverty. And if all adults completed at least secondary education, it is possible to slash global poverty by more than half (Giovetti, 2020).

Education can be a major factor in breaking the cycle of poverty in Taraba state in the following ways:

- Education can effectively reduce poverty when abilities and skills are developed in a child. This develops a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and communication skills and exposes the child to varied job/employment opportunities. Access to high quality primary education

and supporting a child's physical and mental wellbeing is a necessity towards academic efficiency.

- Education not only reduces economic inequality but it ensures fair representation and gender equality. Many people who live at the margins of society or those living with various kinds of disabilities hardly get a voice or fair representation in places or forums where policies, decisions or laws are made for the growth and development of all peoples and the society at large. When such opportunities are available to all, people will be able to live better lives.
- Education reduces risk and vulnerability. Many developing nations face enormous challenges especially for the future due to various threats posed by conflicts, political instability, corrupt leaders, epidemics/diseases, natural disasters (some due to the adverse effects of climate change), etc. With quality education people in such vulnerable environments or places could be able to find remedies or reduce to the barest minimum some existential problems like: infant and maternal mortality, stunting, HIV and AIDS, home and societal violence or abuse, conflicts, poor governance, gender-based violence or inequality, etc. There is also an essential need to provide the psycho-social support for children from conflict-prone areas; many children and even adults in developing countries hardly have issues related to their mental health addressed or taken care of.
- Education helps to also save the planet. Whatever use we make of the planet, we must think of the kind of planet we ought to handover to future generations. Most of the natural disasters we experience today are due to the selfish or irresponsible use of the planet. These natural disasters often leave trails of untold damages to lives and means of livelihood; sometimes with threats of wiping out an entire village, town or city, if nothing is urgently done to counter such threats. In his message on the 43rd World Day of Peace, Benedict XVI (Pope emeritus) told the world, "If you want peace, protect the environment..." (XVI, 2010)

In the quest to emphasize the importance of education in the fight against poverty and also as a means to greater opportunities even in the sports industry, Samuel Eto'o who is the current President of the Cameroonian Football Association believes that Africa could even be better placed to win the World Cup. He said,

Africans have so many talents; Europeans a bit less. But the Europeans have understood something; education. Education is the magic of every success. Education demands patience for which the fruits could be in a distant while and many Africans lack that patience. Europeans do not stop educating themselves even when they have jobs, because they understand that to improve you have to educate yourself. That

is what Africans have to do – educate Africans and not stop. And then we will have the chance to win the World Cup³

Taraba state has great potentials in the areas of agriculture, mineral resources and tourism for an enhanced economic growth. Providing quality education to the citizens of the state will certainly be essential towards harnessing these potentials for the creation of wealth both for the citizens and the state. And this in turn will be a catalyst to breaking the cycle of poverty in families and the state at large.

2.2. EDUCATING THE FARMERS FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME

Education just by itself can achieve relatively little or nothing. The essence of every form of education is the result it produces in the end. One of the greatest challenges of farmers in developing countries in general, and in Taraba state in particular is the gross inadequacy of providing education to farmers or lack of it altogether. It is a unanimous consensus that educated farmers are more innovative, have higher incomes and are more knowledgeable than farmers who are not educated. Those farmers who are not educated usually have one or few options in their methods of farming but the educated ones have more options with better results. This may not necessarily be the case in every single or particular case but generally true.

Wharton opined that a farmer needs a tripartite kind of knowledge if he/she is to do things differently or change. Firstly, the farmer needs knowledge about new inputs. Secondly, the farmer needs knowledge about new techniques or production. And thirdly, the farmer needs economic knowledge, how to translate his farm produce to wealth creation. Farmers must seek to go beyond production-oriented farming to a more scientific-oriented farming. The scientific approach deals with government sponsored research about the different methods and techniques of improved farming in relation to the conditions in that farming environment. Mosher identifies some "essentials" and "accelerators" that need to be taught to farmers for improved production and wealth creation. These "essentials" are: incentives, markets, transport, input supplies and research. The "accelerators" are: education, credit, group action and improving land base and planning. The failure of education to produce results in the area of agriculture is largely due to the absence of some or many of these "essentials" and "accelerators".

Another major constraint for farmers especially in the rural areas is lack of practical skills or know-how. Some of these skills may be too difficult to teach through formal education. Governments or wealthy individuals or organizations are encouraged to set up "Farmers Training Centres". Wharton identifies skill training and practical knowledge of agriculture as major differences in most developing nations. There is,

³ Eto'o, S. (2021). Retrieved 1 15, 2022, from [cbtipsstars.com: facebook.com/championsbettingtipsstars/posts/-samuel-eto-i-am-convinced-that-us-africans-are-significant-in-so-many-things-b/6824](https://cbtipsstars.com/facebook.com/championsbettingtipsstars/posts/-samuel-eto-i-am-convinced-that-us-africans-are-significant-in-so-many-things-b/6824)

therefore, the need to close that gap by improving agricultural skills among extension staff, teachers and leaders of the farming community. In many rural communities, farming activities are part and parcel of their lives and have been done through generations. What they basically lack is up-to-date information on how to grow food more efficiently and economically. Improving the farmers' knowledge of new techniques and technologies, in addition to providing them with incentives or any physical resources necessary for implementation, can dramatically increase the farmer's level of productivity (Mark Rosegrant, Sarah Cline, 2003).

The major goals or aims of educating farmers include:

- To promoting practices that maximize productivity and minimize negative effects on the environment. Such issues concern which crops to grow based on the farming environment (soil, climate, water availability, etc), nutritional value and profit. Increased productivity certainly addresses the problem of hunger and increases income or creates wealth.
- To spark interests in and introduce alternative farming methods and techniques. This is where innovation plays a key role. How to use mechanized farming tools or improved farming methods to increase productivity or yields. Some of the old methods of farming are riskier and farmers use more of their physical energy that could make them age quicker or even reduce their life expectancy.
- To promote sustainable agriculture. The true worth of anything is not just its effectiveness at present but in its sustainability for the future. Breaking the cycle of poverty does not just require increased productivity but it also includes mapping out plans and strategies to sustain it over a long period.

Given that Taraba state has a great number of its citizens or population involved in some form of agriculture, there should be a concerted effort to ensure that these farmers receive some basic education, especially on modern and more efficient or up-to-date methods and techniques of farming. This will be an effective tool in breaking the cycle of poverty in families, communities and the state at large.

2.3. FREE AND QUALITATIVE EDUCATION FOR NURSERY SCHOOL PUPILS

Early childhood education in the National Policy on Education is categorized as pre-primary education and is defined as the education bequeathed to children between the ages of 3 and 5, prior to their entrance into primary school (Nigeria, 1998). As enumerated in this policy, the purpose of pre-primary education includes:

- ix. Transitional stage for the children from the home to the school.
- x. Aiding the children to be better prepared for the primary level of education.
- xi. Providing adequate care and supervision for the children whose parents are in the working class.

- xii. Sowing in the children the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of native and the local environment, playing with toys, arts and musical activities, etc.
- xiii. Teaching the essentials of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, and recently, memorizing the names of the different states and their capitals, etc. This can be done through songs, plays, or short rhymes and poems.
- xiv. Instilling social norms in the children.

The policy document also lists a number of messages to be taken by government to ensure that the aims and objectives of the pre-primary education are made. These include:

- Partnering with private persons or groups in the provision of pre-primary education.
- Making provision in Teacher Training Institutions for special teachers suited for this job. Having to deal with and teach children at such a tender age-group certainly demands special skills.
- Ensuring that the means of communicating with the children is primarily the mother-tongue or the language of the local community. The English language seems to be the common language used now. This is because outside the school environment, the children are exposed to the other local languages in the community and it has also the advantage of preparing them to compete with their peers from other private pre-primary schools when they start their primary education.
- Ensuring that teachers in the pre-primary institutions are suited for the job and that essential tools are provided.

The formal recognition given to pre-primary education in the National Policy on Education (Nigeria, 1977) combined a number of factors which resulted in a huge expansion in the provision of child care and pre-primary education institutions or nursery schools in the country. Despite the fact that one of the aims and objectives of the pre-primary education is to partner with private proprietors in the provision of pre-primary education, it would seem that nearly all the pre-primary education in the country is provided by private proprietors. Some of these establishments bear names like "Day-Care Centres", "Play-Class" or "Play-Groups".

In Taraba State, one of the earliest Nursery schools, if not the first in the state, is the "Model Nursery School" now "Model Nursery and Primary School" in Zing, Zing local government. My biological father, Ferdinand Patrick Nyameh, a retired Primary School Headmaster was tasked with the responsibility of starting that Nursery school in 1985. As at now, as obtained from two sources, there are only about 18 Nursery Schools in total that are public or owned by the government of Taraba State. All the other Nursery schools belong to private proprietors. There are 14 government-owned Nursery schools as obtained from this source (Data). Then there are 4 new government-owned Nursery Schools introduced in four rural communities at Yangtu Special

Development Area of Taraba state. Mr. Rimmande Bitrus, the coordinator of the area said that the state government approved the construction of the Nursery Schools in Kwambai, Bika, Jenuwa Gida and Jenuwa Kogi (Awofadeji, 2008).

The Nursery or pre-primary education has the challenge of staffing. With the exception of a few, most others employ a few holders of the Nigerian Certificate of Education (N.C.E) who are not well paid, while others employ mainly Grade Two Teachers and Secondary School Leavers as teachers. Those that employ qualified teachers, especially those owned by private proprietors, usually charge high fees beyond the reach of children of the ordinary or low-income parents. Those who employ unqualified teachers charge relatively low fees.

Taraba State government must therefore, step-up the establishment of more Nursery Schools which should be free and fully equipped with every learning material or equipment to meet the needs of the children preparing for their primary education. If in the list of 2,823 entries of schools in the state, only a paltry amount of 18 Nursery schools is government owned, it is an indication that the Taraba state government has abandoned pre-primary education to private proprietors, which is unacceptable. Every stage in the education of a child should be of paramount importance to the state government, if quality education is a key priority of government.

2.4. FREE AND QUALITATIVE EDUCATION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

It is certainly undisputable that a solid foundation provided in primary education will be a guarantee for a good educational future for children. Invariably, a weak foundation could affect future progress. The primary school education in Taraba state has a lot of hurdles which include: poor or lack of convenient school buildings for learning, lack of funding, poor or delayed remunerations for teachers and poor or lack of supervision. A case scenario, among so many others, is the terrible situation at Tsakuwa Primary School at Lau Local Government Area. Despite the claims by the state government of spending N3.4 billion (\$8,198,262.93) on primary education in two years, pupils in Tsakuwa Primary School had sheds as classrooms, as reported by Mawa Foundation (Mbamalu, 2021).

The Taraba state government, between 2018 and 2021 approved N5 billion (\$12,056,269.02) for the state's basic education, and N23 billion (\$55,458,837.49) for education budget in general. These huge allocations notwithstanding, a teacher at Tsakuwa Primary School, Adamu Garba, said they had not received their salaries since December 2020. In his own words, he said, as evident in the attached pictures below that is our condition in terms of primary education in Taraba state. As at then, the teachers were still expecting December 2020 salaries in the month of July, 2021. Hence, we have arrears of about 7 months.⁴

⁴ Mbamalu, S. (2021, 7 9). Retrieved 12 11, 2022, from <https://ij.ng/article/after-govts-n3-4bn-taraba-school-children-learn-under-a-shed>

The breakdown of the state budget indicates that in 2019, education got N8,355,032,016.80 billion (\$20,146,102.73) approval, in 2020, it got N9,190,533,218.48 billion (\$22,160,708.18) estimate and it got N10,109,588,740.33 billion (\$24,376,784.3), Mawa Foundation stated (Mbamalu, 2021).

Out of Nigeria's national budget, N691.06 billion (\$1,666,176,378.39) was allocated to the federal ministry of education. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) gets a statutory transfer of N111.79 billion (\$267,649,172.22). UBEC is under the charge of states and local governments who are tasked with delivering a free nine-year education that covers primary school and three years of junior secondary school education. This allocation targets to reduce Nigeria's over 10.1 million out of school children and give them access to basic education.

These are some pictures of Tsakuwa Primary school and the conditions in which the pupils learn or the teachers teach:



(Mbamalu, 2021) accessed on 12/01/2022.

There are so many of such state-owned primary schools across the 16 Local Government Areas in such conditions or even worse. The danger of such a scenario is that parents who can afford to pay the high fees in private owned primary schools prefer to take their children there so they could be guaranteed some quality education. The majority of parents who cannot afford such fees will have no option but to send their children to learn in such terrible conditions. Some of those learning sheds might pose some risk to the children, as reptiles could be hidden there.

Taraba State ought to declare some emergency on the education sector especially at the foundation levels. This declaration should address the following:

- Standard structures for save and conducive learning.
- Ensure there are safe and good sanitary conditions for the pupils and their teachers.
- Prompt payment of primary school teachers as at when due. And ensure periodic training and retraining of these teachers for optimal result in their methods of teaching.
- Periodic supervision of primary schools and any contracts awarded in various primary schools.
- Increase budgetary allocations to the education sector in general and ensure accountability on any funds disbursed for education purposes.

These are some few ways through which Taraba state government will ensure free and quality primary school education for its citizens. The confidence of parents in getting a quality primary education for their children in government owned primary schools has been eroded, and can only be brought back if these issues are adequately and promptly addressed.

One way that Federal Government of Nigeria has enhanced primary school education across the states is through the implementation of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP). This initiative which kick-started in 2004 beginning with 12 states selected from the six geopolitical zones saw little success until the current one which started in 2016. The federal government said that the current programme has witnessed over 300 million meals for more than 7.5 million pupils in 46,000 public primary schools across 22 States (Incorporated, 2018). The NHGSFP is under the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD).

The NHGSFP has the following overall objectives:

- Increase the rate of enrolment in public primary schools across the federation.
- Improve the nutritional and health status of school pupils towards better learning.
- stimulate local agricultural production and boost the income of farmers by creating a viable and ready market via the School Feeding Programme.
- Provide empowerment opportunities for women, which will lead to the improvement of both family and local economy (Incorporated, 2018)

Despite some few teething challenges, the success of the NHGSFP attracted the commendation of the World Food Programme (WFP), describing it as the best in Africa (Suleiman, 2022). The WFP offered to partner with FMHADMSD to provide ICT equipment including tablets, towards promoting nutrition education and better eating habits in the next phase. A joint statement by Halima Oyelade of FMHADMSD and Chi Lael of the WFP, after an assessment conducted in the first quarter of 2021 to identify ways of improving the programme, reads in part,

The hardware will support the Ministry's efforts to digitalise its monitoring and evaluation system, and equally enhance the national roll out of the PLUS School

Menu Tool developed by WFP to standardise cost-effective menu developed⁵

The model of payment procedures and the job description of the cooks on the NHGSFP put in place by the Ogun State Government (South-West Nigeria) are best suited for transparency and accountability and should be adopted by Taraba and other States of the Federation. For the payment procedures:

- Each cook is required to open a bank account with designated banks and obtain a Bank Verification Number (BVN).
- Each account holder must send the account details to Nigeria Inter Bank Settlement System (NIBS) for verification.
- Each account cleared is then processed for the amount paid to each cook. This payment is based on the number of pupils assigned and the number of days stipulated.
- Each cook receives a direct payment through the verified account and not through a third party.
- Cooks receive funds fortnightly.

Then the job descriptions for the cooks are:

- They are required to purchase the food items and ingredients for cooking based on the approved menu by the State.
- They are then to prepare meals for their assigned pupils in a hygienic and clean condition.
- They are required to arrive in the school prior to break time.
- They must sign each day the feeding attendance sheet of pupils served.
- They are to wash the food bowls after meals and stored them safely and neatly (Incorporated, 2018)

The provision of food to the primary school pupils has certainly been a positive reinforcement to school attendance especially in the villages where many children are unsure of a healthy meal in a day. The NHGSFP has certainly been a huge success and could only be better improved and sustained.



www.premiumtimesng.com Accessed 23/02/2022

2.5. AFFORDABLE AND QUALITATIVE EDUCATION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

⁵ Incorporated, A. H. (2018). Retrieved 02 23, 2022, from [actionhealthinc.org: https://www.actionhealthinc.org/school-feeding-project/](https://www.actionhealthinc.org/school-feeding-project/)

After the primary school education, the secondary school education plays a vital role in preparing young people not only for the tertiary education but also for the labour market as well. Many young people, whose parents are unable to afford their tertiary education, find themselves in various jobs in the labour market, including service to the nation in the armed forces or paramilitary agencies. According to a researcher, an increasing number of young people in secondary education entail increasing diverse talents, diverse job interests and job opportunities (Oruonye, 2014). While some of them are able to continue with their self-funded tertiary education after a few years of work, some of them have their dreams of tertiary education cut short unfortunately.

Apart from the lack of sponsorship through tertiary education, another challenge is poor performance in their terminal examination. This challenge is reinforced by other challenges, inadequate teachers, inadequate funding and poor learning environment and infrastructure. Many secondary schools in Taraba state hugely depend on getting teachers from among graduates on their one-year mandatory service to the nation; those on the National Youth Service Corp scheme (NYSC).

Research reveals that the performance of students with credit passes in five subjects including English Language and Mathematics, which are the basic or standard requirements for admission to any tertiary institution has not exceeded 15 percent in recent times (Olatoun, 2021). It was observed that the 2010 West Africa School Certificate Examination (WASCE) results analysis shows that only 25% of these students passed with the national minimum requirements of obtaining 5 credits including English Language and Mathematics. This mass failure is a great cause of concern for so many who feel the secondary education in the country is inefficient and wastage of resources (Akinsola, 2005 and Olatoun, 2012).

Another huge challenge to secondary school education, especially for the girl-child in the rural areas is early marriage and teenage pregnancy. In research carried out in Zing in 2020, 192 pregnant teenagers/teenage mothers in the area were interviewed. In that interview, 27.6% agreed strongly that education disruption is one of the consequences of teenage pregnancy, 54.2% also agreed with the same view. 10.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 7.3% also disagreed with the view that education disruption is one of the consequences of teenage pregnancy. Overall, then, a higher percentage affirmed that education disruption is one of the consequences of teenage pregnancy (Charles Nzasi-benwo Nyameh and Collins Francis Somorija, 2020).

Another obstacle to the delivery of a quality secondary school education in Taraba state is the widespread incidences of examination malpractices. There seems to be an unholy alliance between some school proprietors or principals and the external examination invigilators during the terminal examination for secondary school leavers or the WASCE. According to a person I interviewed, we now have many schools that are known as “Miracle centres” and students in

such schools are required to pay “Malpractice fee” so that on the day of the examinations, the invigilators would just look-away while teachers or some persons are hired to dictate answers to the students. These instances are prevalent in both private and government owned schools. In some bizarre instances, a male could be writing the examination for a female registered student and vice versa (Francis, 2021). This is why a student could have excellent results in their WASCE but is unable to defend such beautiful results on a one-on-one encounter.

If the Taraba state government is to ensure the delivery of an affordable and quality education to its citizens, some steps such as these, must be taken:

- Increased budgetary allocation to education that should address the infrastructural deficits for learning in the secondary schools, including good sanitary conditions.
- Employment of qualified teachers and ensure they are properly and promptly paid their salaries or wages.
- Organization of periodic seminars, in-training and further training of teachers to keep them up-to-date to modern and best practices of the teaching profession.
- Organization of periodic debates, quiz competitions, arts competition, inter-house and inter-school sports competitions, etc in order to keep the students intellectually, mentally and physically sound.
- Re-enforcement of students’ performance through price-giving and scholarship to deserving students.
- Constant supervision especially during terminal examinations to ensure that the students’ results truly reflect their intellectual capabilities.
- There should also be some supervision of private schools to ensure compliance with government’s standards. Some of these private schools engage in unwholesome practices such as examination malpractices in order to be rated high and woo more students to enrol there.

On a positive note, and in an effort to make some improvements on the delivery of quality education to students in the state, the government of Darius Ishaku Dickson established a ministry in 2020 called “Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education” currently headed by Hon. Johannes Jigem. This ministry is under the Ministry of Post Primary School Management Board (Education, 2020). The functions and some of the achievements of this new ministry since its establishment include:

- The monthly feeding allocation to Exchange Programme Colleges: Government Comprehensive Secondary School, Jalingo and Marmara Government Girls Secondary School, Wukari.
- Training of 100 youths in Israel for employment/empowerment.
- The registration of WASCE for the students of the Special Education Centres in Mutum Biyu (Gassol

Local Government) and Garbabi (Bali Local Government) and for the Exchange students.

- The publication of Education Sector Plan and annual school census.
- The transportation of students on Exchange Programme.
- Approval and acceptance of Gechan [NGO] in collaboration with the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB)/Ministry of Education (MOE) to set up JAMB Centre in Gembu (Sardauna Local Government).

Such a step is commendable and if more could be done to reach out to so many secondary schools to address their basic and most pressing needs, there will certainly be a turn-around for the better in the delivery of secondary school education in the state.

2.6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Since the creation of Taraba state on the 27th of August, 1991 from the former Gongola state (now Adamawa state) by the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, there had been a gross deficit of tertiary institutions in the state. It was not until 2005 that the Kwararafa University, a private one, was established; it was at then nowhere close to what a university ought to be. The state had only colleges and polytechnics. Many of the citizens of Taraba state had to go to other Federal and State Universities located in various states across the country; this meant extra cost.

Relief was, however, to come the way of many students in Taraba state with the establishment of Taraba State University (TSU) in 2008 and the Federal University Wukari also in the state during the administration of the then governor, the Late Danbaba Danfulani Suntai. These two universities and other tertiary institutions in the state like: College of Education, Zing; Taraba State College of Nursing and Midwifery, Jalingo; Peacock College of Education, Jalingo; College of Agriculture, Jalingo, Kwararafa University, Wukari, Federal Polytechnic, Bali; State Polytechnic, Jalingo; State Polytechnic, Suntai (Engine, 2016) have been supplying the educational needs of so many students from the state and other states of the federation as well.

Some of the government owned tertiary institutions especially the recently established ones are still going through their teething challenges as regards poor funding, infrastructural deficits, and incessant industrial strikes ASUU, the situation of tertiary education in Taraba state is, nevertheless, much better than 15-20 years back. More citizens of Taraba state can now access tertiary education from these institutions than when they had to go to other states of the federation for their tertiary education. The Taraba state government can only continue to improve on what is currently on grounds by investing more on education and ensuring through checks and balances that best practices are maintained and sustained in these institutions. Students could also be motivated through grants or state scholarship, especially those who are financially challenged.

2.6.1 MODE OF TUITION PAYMENT

Unlike the universities in the U.S and other Western countries, nearly all Nigerian universities accept only a one-off payment of tuition fees per semester. Some of the payments are made through bank transfers or cash payments in the schools. A rare exception to this will be the Baze University which is private. In this university, the student has payment options as the tuition could be paid per semester or per academic year. If the student chooses the per semester payment but is unable to pay in full, he or she could pay in instalments. The student must, however, ensure complete payment of the tuition prior to the commencement of examinations (University, 2011).

Admittedly, the tuition fees in Nigerian state-owned universities are relatively cheap compared to the tuition fees in the U.S and other Western countries, but due to the economic situations in the country, many parents still find it difficult to sponsor their children through the tertiary education. The private universities charge much higher fees but those who can afford to send their children there are guaranteed of lack of disruption in the academic cycle as a result of internal or general strikes by ASUU. This has been a core factor in the blossoming of private universities in Nigeria despite their high cost (Price, 2022). In recent past, private universities were considered as second class and most of the students were seen as mere opportunists. It was either they were considered not good enough for Federal or State Universities or they were just too rich to waste their resources and time. In those times, private universities were not among the top 30 higher institutions in Nigeria. In a recent list by the National University Commission (NUC), however, one private university was ranked among the top 10 universities in Nigeria. This university in question is the Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State and ranked 5th in the country (NUC, 2022).

The general system of one-off payment of tuition is a huge challenge for many parents and students. Sometimes some students will have their school session disrupted as they have to travel home to collect their tuition. Some of the students whose parents are unable to pay are then exposed to crime or prostitution in order to pay their tuition. Such bad ways often come with bitter consequences, including withdrawal from school in case of crime. The Federal and State governments in Nigeria in collaboration with the governing bodies of these universities should endeavour to create platforms where tuition fees could be paid in instalments over a period of time. This will definitely motivate more students to enrol in tertiary institutions and concentrate more on their studies.

2.6.2 INTERNET FACILITIES

When it comes to accessibility to internet facilities for educational purposes, Nigeria as a whole, and Nigerian Universities in particular are far behind. Most Nigerian universities have yet to adopt a policy of providing equitable accessibility to the internet for their staff, let alone their students. There is no doubt that the most affected will be the students; students who need accessibility to the internet for research purposes to enhance their study are greatly impeded by lack of, or at best, very poor internet connectivity

(Anunobi, 2008) These students often rely on the use of mobile data or modems provided by mobile operators in the country; these are not only often very expensive to subscribe, but also very slow and poor in connectivity.

The world did not certainly envisage the near-standstill of physical contacts and activities occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic globally. Many countries with good internet facilities or connectivity were able to move many of their works and programmes online, including some educational activities. In Nigeria, however, following the March 20, 2020 Federal government shutdown to curb the spread of the corona virus, students had to go home and the campuses became deserted. Some universities struggled to shift some of their academic activities online but they were impeded by poor internet infrastructure and a lack of steady or reliable electricity supplies (Okocha, 2020).

According to Omolulu Soyombo, a lecturer in Lagos State University, internet infrastructure also impedes the delivery of lectures online or making online learning serve as an alternative in Nigerian Universities. And a Professor of Mass Communication in the same university, Lai Oso, is quoted to have said, some of my students did contact me to say that even for a whole day there may be no power supply in their areas and in some cases the internet connection is very poor⁶

If Nigerian Universities are to improve learning and research capacity, the governments in all tiers must partner with the university governing boards to provide standard internet facilities, especially Wi-Fi. The 21st century is certainly not one in which vital organs of the society such as academic institutions should be without the provision of standard and secured internet connectivity. On the other hand, these facilities must also be safeguarded from cyber-attacks which have become a modern warfare. Internet fraudsters are on the prowl and could cause mass harm by hacking into the servers or internet systems of institutions.

2.6.3 A SYSTEM OR PLATFORM TO CHECK PLAGIARISM

The recent announcement in the month of April 2021, by the Committee of the Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, that it had developed “Eaglescan” plagiarism detection software might come as a shock to many climes where the system had long been in place. One would wonder how the Nigerian academic institutions had been battling the issue of plagiarism. Poor or lack of internet facilities in most Nigerian academic institutions is certainly a major cause for such inability to develop any software to check plagiarism; most written assignments and theses are usually submitted manually. When I interviewed a lecturer in the department of sociology with Taraba State, Collins Francis Somorija, on how the tertiary institutions especially were dealing with the issues of plagiarism for written assignments and theses, he

⁶ Okocha, S. (2020, 4 9). Poor Internet brings Academic Work to a Virtual Standstill. *University World News Africa Edition* .

said, “I can confidently tell you that if the theses in some tertiary institutions are subject to plagiarism checks, over 70% of theses may go below acceptable standards” (Somorija, 2021). I can attest to what Somorija said as I was once approached by someone who needed financial assistance for his thesis.

Upon further interrogation about what he was writing on and at what stage his work was, he told me he wanted the money so that he could take it to some of the workers at the computer centres outside the College of Education, Zing (my hometown) who will deliver a written and bound thesis to him to present to the school. I was shocked and wondered how he will be able to defend such a thesis that someone wrote, but he said it was commonly practiced there. In conscience, I told him I will never support such a practice and so will not give him any assistance for such academic fraud.

At the public presentation of the development of Eaglescan Anti-Plagiarism Software, Prof. Samuel Edoumiekumo the chairman of the committee encouraged his colleagues to meet periodically in order to discuss local and global best practices in tertiary education, innovative ways of confronting and managing challenges and deep thinking on the future of the country’s university system (Nigeria N. A., www.thecable.ng, 2021). The Vice President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo, at this public presentation described plagiarism as a form of corruption and stated the present government’s commitment to supporting all initiatives that will build and enhance integrity of higher institutions. He further said, let me give the assurance that the government will give all that needed support to ensure that anti-plagiarism measures are instituted across the country⁷ Abubakar Rasheed, executive secretary of the NUC also stated,

Creating the software is only a step to fight plagiarism. Universities ought to take concrete steps to institutionalize anti-plagiarism policy that forbids all aspects of the intellectual theft...For so long, the issue of plagiarism, among others, such as copyright as well as abuses of infringement have robbed our universities of the much-desired integrity⁸

The Eaglescan Anti-Plagiarism Software is a blend of global open source and closed source repositories, local open education repositories, giving users access to validate title abstracts and generate originality report. This development is certainly a step in the right direction towards building authenticity as it relates to learning, originality, research efforts and academic integrity in general.

2.6.4 PROVISION OF LECTURE NOTES/MATERIALS

Lecture notes or materials are commonly called “handouts” in Nigerian academic institutions. The essence of the provision of handouts is to aid students to learn or better understand the courses taught to them. Not all students have the same

⁷ Nigeria, N. A. (2021, 04 28). Retrieved 12 21, 2021, from [thecable.ng](http://www.thecable.ng): <https://www.thecable.ng/fg-launches-plagiarism-detection-software>

⁸ Nigeria, N.A. (2021,04 28). Ibid

intellectual capabilities to understand all the lectures delivered to them physically by their lecturers, or even when they are delivered online. With lecture notes, they are able to read over and over again for a better understanding. In so many places or institutions of learning, these lectures notes are delivered online and the students only need to download and print them for their own use. The students in most Nigerian universities do not enjoy such privileges; they are often compelled to buy these handouts at exorbitant prices or risk failing the course. In Nigeria, sadly, institutions have been long citadels where students are compelled to purchase textbooks and handouts recommended and written by their lecturers or risk failing those courses (Tare Youdeowei, Elizabeth Uwandu & Kelechukwu Iruoma, 2016).

ASUU, in acknowledgement of this unwholesome practice expressed dissatisfaction at the mandatory sale of handouts by some lecturers. The President of this union, Prof. Biodun Ogunyemi said, lecturers in our tertiary institutions ought not to compel students to buy handouts, though it is not a widespread practice; we have a few culprits⁹ But despite the condemnation by ASUU and the claim that it was not a widespread practice and that it has a system to check and sanction defaulting lecturers, the experience of most students say otherwise. Most students lament that such practice is widespread and the lecturers often cover one another because most of them do it to raise personal income at the expense of students.

Students of various tertiary institutions speaking in separate interviews commonly maintain that they are forced to buy handouts or risk failing the courses. A few students separately interviewed expressed various concerns about this practice of selling handouts to students by lecturers: Mr. Osita Chukwu, a student of the University of Abuja, alleged that a student, usually the class representative, is assigned to sell the handouts to his colleagues. The price for a set of handouts ranges between N1,500 (\$3.62) and N2,000 (\$4.8) and the students also had to submit their registration numbers for identification of 'defaulters'. He further stated that the lecturers will make it mandatory that the students will have no option that to purchase it, because if any of them photocopies the handouts, the person stands the risk of failing that course.¹⁰ Miss Joy David, a student of the Nasarawa State University Keffi, decried the manner some lecturers compel students to purchase handouts that sometimes lack depth.¹¹ Miss Janet Obiora, a student of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye opines that the mandatory sell of handouts to students by some lecturers promotes mediocrity as many students develop less interest to use the school library for research.¹² A student of Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who chose to be anonymous said, in my department a lecturer said his textbooks and handouts are not compulsory but will tell the class representative to get him the names of

those that paid. What is the purpose for collecting those names? She queried!¹³ Another student who also spoke in anonymity reported that a lecturer told them that, a doctor (PhD) cannot release his knowledge to students for free.¹⁴

This is an overview of what most students go through in tertiary institutions in Nigeria as regards the compulsory sale of handouts or lecture materials. Some of the students report that some of these lecturers tell them they are not well paid and so had to resort to the sale of handouts to make ends meet. While it is true that some Federal and State Universities are sometimes owed salaries and allowances, resulting sometimes to industrial strike by ASUU, the practice of the sale of handouts by some lecturers have become so endemic and a cool way of making cash, that even when they are paid as at when due, the practice is not likely to stop. This unwholesome practice is part of the general academic corruption of 'sorting' of lecturers in order to pass a course or excel with honours. The governments at all levels must ensure increased budgetary funding to the education sector but also ensure that it collaborates with governing authorities of universities to maintain checks and balances. Lecturers who are found wanting must be disciplined appropriately to dissuade others from doing same. ASUU should do much more than condemning the act of handouts selling by lecturers; they are in a better position to know these lecturers and clean their house from within.

Many students in the tertiary institutions have to grapple with meeting up to the payment of their tuition fees, let alone purchasing handouts from all or most of the courses they have to take. Some students may sometimes resort to crime or prostitution in order to raise money to buy these handouts and to cater for their personal needs. If some of these lecturers complain they are not able to make ends meet despite being paid salaries and allowances, how do they expect these students to meet up to all these financial burdens on them and still concentrate on their academic progress? It is necessary to stop this practice, so that in the end a student is assessed on merit rather than on some financial obligations for the personal benefits of lecturers.

2.6.5 A SYSTEM FOR STAFF ASSESSMENT BY STUDENTS

It is very obvious that besides some corrupt or unwholesome practices in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria that are perpetrated by some lecturers such as: 'sorting', sale of handouts or lecture materials, sexual and physical harassment or violence, deliberate failing of some students and awarding undeserved marks to some students, etc, the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, are yet to develop a workable and effective system through which academic staff could be assessed by their students. As rightly observed by Adomi (2007) students are the direct consumers of services rendered by universities; hence their views on all aspects of their higher

⁹ Oluwagbemi, A. (2017, 08 15). Retrieved 01 30, 2022, from [punchng.com: https://punchng.com/asuu-condemns-sales-of-handouts-by-lecturers](https://punchng.com/asuu-condemns-sales-of-handouts-by-lecturers)

¹⁰ Oluwagbemi, A. (2017, 08 15). Ibid

¹¹ Oluwagbemi, A. (2017, 08 15). Ibid

¹² Oluwagbemi, A. (2017, 08 15). Ibid

¹³ Tare Youdeowei, Elizabeth Uwandu & Kelechukwu Iruoma. (2016, 11 03). Retrieved 01 30, 2022, from [vanguardngr.com: https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/11/students-lament-compulsory-handouts-tertiary-institutions](https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/11/students-lament-compulsory-handouts-tertiary-institutions)

¹⁴ Tare Youdeowei, Elizabeth Uwandu & Kelechukwu Iruoma. (2016, 11 03) Ibid

education experiences are essential to the effective monitoring of quality in universities (Yvonne Hill, Laurie Lomas & Janet MacGregor, 2003).

Performance appraisal /evaluation are a system through which employees are given feedback on their performance and further reward and promotion. In universities and colleges, there are some basic criteria for evaluating academic staff: teaching, research and service. The primary criterion, especially with direct implications for the students is teaching. It is not enough that students have teachers, what they teach and how they teach is equally of paramount importance; and those who are better placed to assess these staff are the students. While their colleagues in America and Europe enjoy such privileges of assessing their academic staff, Nigerian students in tertiary institutions are yet to enjoy such privileges, even if such a system could be claimed to be in place. Rather, the current performance appraisal/evaluation places more emphasis on publications and paper presentation at conferences. As Students Evaluation of Teachers Effectiveness (SETE) is undermined in Nigerian universities and colleges, many staff members just do whatever they like in class and go scot-free.

The teaching profession or job is not just about the academic achievements or excellence of the staff but involves also a great deal of their emotional and psychological comportment. Their emotional and psychological competence ought to be assessed so that they teach rightly and impact the desired fruits on their students. And because universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria adopted a laissez-faire approach to performance appraisal, academic staff are not closely monitored with regards to their in-class effectiveness. This situation failed to enhance the quality of performance and credibility of graduates of tertiary institutions as teaching is given a low priority (Ighojekwe Polycarp A., Ugo-Okoro Chigoze P., & Agbonye Charity Oby, 2015).

Any business enterprise that is worth its salt and wishes to make progress today will have to hear feedbacks from its customers; either through direct communication or through the rating of a product or products. This is the only way that any of such business enterprise could ensure customer satisfaction and maintain standards or improve on what needs to be improved. With regards to the performance evaluation of academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions, this has been a key missing link that ought to be prioritized without further delay. What is obtainable is just a system where the academic staff members have ways to evaluate their students but the students are not given the opportunities to evaluate the performance of their academic staff; at best, students could only report their lecturers over some infringes which are mostly issues to be handled by the disciplinary committee. In short, lecturers evaluate themselves for promotion and awards and the students are not given the opportunity to evaluate their performance on their all-important and primary duty of teaching.

2.7. A REVOLUTION OF THE MIND WHERE EDUCATION IS SEEN NOT ONLY FOR JOB

SEEKING BUT ALSO FOR JOB CREATION/PROVISION

Nigeria's huge population, the number of graduates it produces annually and the paucity of jobs to absorb these graduates is great cause for concern. A data from the World Bank estimates Nigeria's population at 206,139,587 in 2020 with approximately 60% young, energetic working-age group that could greatly make positive impacts on the country's economy (Ukazu, 2021). Another World Bank data pinpoints the percentage of unemployed Nigerians with advance education at 13.6% in 2016 and 15.3% in 2019 (Ukazu, 2021). As at 2019, there are 134 recognized Polytechnics and 174 Universities that are either owned by the Federal, State Governments as well as those that are privately owned. It is estimated that these institutions admit about 2 million students and graduate about 600,000 annually (Aririah, 2021). There is certainly no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant economic problems must have put a further strain on the paucity of jobs, which will certainly raise the percentage of the unemployed graduates.

We had a situation in the country in 2014, where a total number of 520,000 unemployed graduates stormed different recruitment centres to apply for 4000 vacant advertised slots in the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS). A stampede on the day of the aptitude test saw the death of 16 graduates with scores sustaining varying degrees of injuries (Aririah, 2021). It was however, the opinion of some that among such huge number of applicants were also some who were employed already but were looking for better or greener jobs. It was also very appalling that the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Abba Moro was not sanctioned by the then President, Goodluck Jonathan. Instead, Abba Moro was given a senatorial ticket by his political party, PDP and is currently a senator representing Benue South. The then President only gave automatic employment slots to each member of the deceased graduates as a compensation.

With so many appalling situations as this, the continuous addition of graduates in the labour market and the yawning deficits in available jobs, what does the future hold for these graduates? What could be done to address such a pathetic situation with possible devastating consequences? One thing is sure; the government at all levels will certainly not be able to absorb all the graduates into the labour force. And this is where this recommended revolution of the mind envisaged here comes to play. Why should graduates be stereotyped into thinking or believing that the sole reason they are educated is to get jobs; and 'white-collar' jobs in the thinking of so many? There is certainly no doubt that being educated exposes one to job opportunities, but it can also make one a job creator or provider as well.

Nigeria as a country is also blessed with so many other job creation opportunities that the graduates could explore rather than solely relying on government jobs or jobs from big private firms. Even the Federal Government of Nigeria has adduced one reason why many Nigerian graduates are unemployable, they lack basic skills. At a two-day conference organized by the Federal Government of Nigeria in

collaboration with the Skills Development for Youth Employment (SKYE), sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development, Arch. Sonny Echono, the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, explained that millions of graduates in the country are unemployed due to lack of specific skills required for the job (Erunke, 2021). With the requisite skills and ‘revolutionalized’ minds that being educated is not only for job seeking but also for job creation or provision, so much of the deficits of available jobs will be bridged and the socio-economic situations of these graduates and the nation at large will be a lot better. Taraba state, despite its huge potentials in the areas of agriculture and tourism, seems to be heavily dependent on the civil service to power its economic growths and activities. Once, the few civil servants in the state are not paid their salaries, the economic life of many citizens is hugely affected. This is even the more reason why graduates in Taraba State must have a mindset towards job creation rather than just waiting for the few available jobs in the civil service or even in the private sectors. Towing this path could be quite challenging in the beginning, refusal only makes the existing situations worse. The time to act is now and it begins from changing mindsets and adopting more of thought-provoking and problem-solving attitudes rather than a do-nothing-approach or an endless-complaining attitude.

CHAPTER THREE (3): General Analysis

3.1. BELIEVING AND ACCEPTING THAT TARABA STATE HAS ENOUGH RESOURCES TO END POVERTY

Taraba state is the third largest state in Nigeria in terms of land mass with a population estimate of 2.5 million people (a projection from the 2006 National Population Census). Taraba State is agriculture-friendly with great tourism potentials, and has huge mineral deposits. These reasons must have informed the nicknaming of the state as “Nature’s Gift to the Nation”. With all these potentials, one wonders how the state became one of those states in the country with the highest persons living below the poverty line, according to a statistic conducted in 2019.

In the 2005 “Make Poverty History” rally in London, Nelson Mandela said, like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not inborn, it is a creation of people and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings¹⁵ And Victoria Kwakwa, the Vice-President of the World Bank Group for East Africa and Pacific also believes that ending poverty by 2030 is a possibility and that will boost shared prosperity among the poorest 40% in every country (McConville, 2020). As the saying goes, “where there is a will there is way”, it means that the fight to end poverty is achievable and that such progress can always be made even in the midst of daunting challenges.

If Taraba state is to make any meaningful progress in the battle against poverty, there has to be a belief that the state is

endowed with the resources and the capabilities to win that battle. In the words of Alex Thier, Tarabans (government and people) must commit an act of rebellion by rejecting the mindset that we have always had and will always have extreme poverty (Thier, 2015). Changing old negative mindsets and learning new positive mindsets are primary steps in the race to win the battle against poverty. The next steps will be to identify the root causes of poverty, those things or conditions which reinforce poverty, and deploying the right steps to address them adequately. In the words of Teva, we, too often focus on immediate human needs without addressing the issues that create them (Sienicki, 2016).

3.2. MAKE EXISTING FARMLANDS MORE PRODUCTIVE

Statistics estimates that most of those who live in extreme poverty are subsistence farmers. This means that the first focus on the fight against extreme poverty will be to fight against hunger. People must have food to eat to survive and children especially need food to grow physically and mentally in order to reach their full potentials in life. Existing farmlands must thus be made more productive. As identified by Andrew Youn, one of the reasons why we can win the fight against poverty is to make farmers to be more productive in order to feed themselves, help others and reduce environmental land pressures (Youn, 2016). Most of these farmers still rely on outdated or old-fashioned implements and tools to cultivate the land. This method is not only less productive but also makes these farmers expend so much physical energy whereas they could use more technologically advanced tools with little physical energy and greater yields.

Humanity has theoretically solved the problem of agriculture a century ago when hybrid seeds, fertilizers and farm-spacing were achieved. And as Bono would say, we ought to ensure that at least some of the wealth under the ground ends up in the hands of those who live above it...we cannot get it done until we accept, we can get it done (Hewson, 2013). When the present administration in the federal government of Nigeria came to power in 2015, one of its cardinal aims was to cut the importation of food, especially rice, in favour of boosting local production. This was a hard and unpopular decision but a step in the right direction. This decision had its momentary hardships as the prices of some food products, especially rice, sky-rocketed. I had a friend who gave me a 2Kg bag of hybrid rice seedlings. I cultivated that rice in my compound and applied some fertilizers. At harvest, I got over ten 50Kg bags of rice. It was enough for me to eat throughout the year and to even assist some people with it. This saved me the cost of purchasing rice in a whole year and I was also able to assist some people with the rice to plant as well. These are some photos of me on the rice farm and during the harvest as can be seen below:

¹⁵ McConville, K. (2020, 11 02). Retrieved 02 03, 2022, from concernusa.org: <https://www.concernusa.org/story/can-we-end-poverty/>



Making existing farmlands to be more productive involves the use of improved or hybrid seedlings, fertilizers and the use of modern farming tools and techniques to improve productivity and income. In the case of livestock rearing, one system that has effectively been used to improve livestock production and quality is through the use of artificial insemination. This is not merely a novel method of bringing about impregnation in females, but also a portent tool for livestock improvement. Through this method, the germplasm of the bulls of superior quality can be effectively used with the least regard for their location (PORTAL, 2009). Artificial insemination also considerably reduces genital and non-genital diseases in farm stock; but unless they are handled by experts or competent persons employing best practices, the process could be counter-productive.

Many farming communities in Taraba state are not able to access other distant farmable areas due to poor road networks or lack of the means of transport to use. The result of this means that available farm areas are often overused and with time the yields begin to dwindle. The immediate solution to increase yields will be to use hybrid seeds, fertilizers, modern farming tools and techniques.

3.3. MAKE THE FORESTS MORE FARMABLE

Below is a map of Nigeria with the map of Taraba state within, coloured red.



En-wikipedia.org Accessed 04/02/2022

This map is a clear indication that Taraba state with a land mass of 54,473 Km² is the third largest in Nigeria. Located in the Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria, Taraba state was created out of the defunct Gongola state in 1991 by the then military government of General Ibrahim Babangida. The name was derived from the 'Taraba' river which transverses

the southern part of the state and it is nicknamed, "Nature's Gift to the Nation" (Adisa, 2011) Taraba is highly heterogeneous, multi-ethnic state with the major occupation of the people being agriculture. Other primary activities range from fishing, pottery, cloth weaving, dyeing, mat making, wood carving, embroidery and blacksmithing. The state is adorned with undulating landscape dotted with a few mountain ranges. The vegetation in the southern part is of low forest while the northern part has undulating grassland. The Mambila Plateau with an altitude of 1,800 metres (6000 ft) above sea level has a temperate climate throughout the year (Adisa, 2011).

Taraba state is blessed with a weather that is agriculture-friendly. It has a wet climate usually between April to October and a dry climate usually between November to March. This is a clear testimony that Taraba has vast areas of uncultivated forest that could be turned into farmlands to boost agriculture in the state. The biggest challenges to achieving this are lack of roads or poor roads to access these uncultivated forest and insecurity that scares farmers from going into the hinterlands to farm. So many farmers have often lost their lands in isolated farmlands either from armed Fulani herdsmen or from rival ethnic groups. These, are challenges that the government of Taraba state in collaboration with the people need to address if more forests are to be turned into productive farmlands, with attendant benefits to the economy of the state and wealth creation for the people.

3.4. GOVERNMENT'S PARTNERSHIP WITH WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO BOOST AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

At the core of this recommendation is the realization by both the government and the people that no government can ever solve all the economic problems or challenges of its people. The private sector is very important to the economic well-being of the state; and better still when there is collaboration between the government and the private sector. Taraba state must muster the political will to partner with wealthy individuals and groups/organizations especially in the areas of agriculture in order to change the economic fortunes of the state for the better.

Taraba state is very deficient in this area of partnership especially in the areas of large-scale mechanized farming, processing and storage of agricultural products. Hence, food production is not enhanced and wastage becomes inevitable as there are no processing industries and storage facilities that could have been game changers in the economic fortunes of the state. Notably, the administration of Governor Darius Ishaku has made some efforts towards this direction in the last few years. At the invitation of the governor, a group of German investors were in the state to do a feasibility study of the Lau Tomatoes Company which has been comatose for over three decades. The team leader, Engr. Michael Struve assured the governor that his team will be able to revive the company by replacing the obsolete equipment with modern ones which are faster and can produce at a very high speed both in quantity and quality, noting that German technology is

among the best in the world (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2016).

Engr. Michael Struve described Taraba as an investment haven, richly blessed by God that would delight every investor to partner with. He said that all that is required for the vision of the governor to be materialized is political will and the provision of necessary infrastructure such as roads, water and power which are critical and essential components for the survival and sustenance of any viable company (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2016)

Another success story in Nigeria as a whole and Taraba in particular is the World Bank Fadama III Project. It is a follow-up to the Fadama II Project which positively empowered rural farmers, raising their incomes by 63%. The term “Fadama” is adopted from the Hausa Language which means ‘irrigable land’; usually marshy areas found along major river systems. Fadamas also serve as sources of water for livestock during dry seasons and becomes a habitat for diverse resident or transient wildlife including herbivores, carnivores and migratory birds (Bank, 2010). Abimbola Adubi, World Bank team leader for the project affirmed that they now enjoy good working relationships with the governors and commissioners of agriculture of most states and is hopeful that in a short time, Fadama will make great impacts in the rural areas and enhance productivity and well-being of farmers (Bank, 2010). One area in Taraba state that attested to the success story of this project is Kachalla Sembe village; the traditional ruler of the village, Alhaji Usman Bobbo Kachalla, speaking through a translator said, “This is the only project to match words to actions”¹⁶ The Fadama III Project which was endorsed by the World Bank’s Board of Directors in July, 2008, has six major components:

1. Capacity building
2. Small scale community-owned properties.
3. Advisory Services and input support development.
4. Assistance to the Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs), sponsored research and on-farm demonstrations.
5. Asset ownership for individual Fadama Users Groups (FUGs), Economic Interest Groups (EIGs).
6. Project management, monitoring and evaluation (Bank, 2010)

Governor Darius Ishaku also recently engaged, via a virtual meeting, a US-based Foreign Development and Investment Groups led by Mahmood Mustapha Founder & Futurist Filab, Silvio F. Pupo CEO Logos Capital, and Peter Mendez President & CEO Ist SOS Inc. Mendez assured the governor that the group possesses the requisite expertise in the establishment of malls, promotion of agriculture, the hospitality industry and mineral resources development and marketing (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2020). Governor

Darius solicited the group to site a mall in Jalingo, the state capital, in order to support the marketing of agricultural products from his administration’s brain-child project, the ‘Green House’. The Green House Project produces tomatoes, pepper, lettuce and notably cucumbers; the governor is in fact nicknamed by the locals as “Baba Cucumber”, which literally means “Father Cucumber”. He also encouraged the group to make agriculture attractive to the teeming youths in the state, stating that his administration will give all the needed support to the group to succeed. Governor Darius assured the group that Taraba state is safe for investors, despite a few cases of security challenges the state has witnessed (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2020).

While these engagements are steps in the right direction, when they will translate into practical realities is the main concern of the citizens. Many citizens of the state have little trust in the government in these areas, as past engagements stretching to other administrations have not yielded the desired fruits. This is evident even from the statement of the traditional ruler of Kachalla Sembe on the Fadama III Project that “This is the first project to match words to actions”. This indicates that they had promises made to them or seen such engagements in the past with no practical results in the end. The government of Taraba state must ensure they change that narrative through a strong political will and the provision of all the essential elements that will attract investors to the state. This is the way to grow the economy and enhance wealth creation among the citizens.

3.5. RE-INTRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL SHOWS/EXHIBITION

Growing up as a child, one of the events I often look forward to annually, was the ‘Agricultural Show’ which is known in the local Hausa language as “Wasan Gona”. This was a competitive event among farmers across my Local Government Area where an array of various kinds of food crops and livestock grown or reared in the area were displayed. A group of inspectors would choose the best crops and livestock and prices were given to the owners as a way of motivating them to do better. It was also an avenue to assess ways and methods for the preservation of certain crops or livestock that were in danger of going extinct. Speaking about Agricultural show and the need to increase funding for the event in Ireland, a Fianna Fáil TD or Member of Parliament, Eugene Murphy said, Agricultural shows are a vital part of the fabric of rural life. As part of the cultural identity of rural life in Ireland, they form a focal point in the annual social calendar of a rural area (O'Donnell, 2019). Murphy maintained that such agricultural shows also attract visitors and help in boosting the local rural economies; hence such shows should be safeguarded by restoring funding levels.

It is disheartening to see that such agricultural shows have since disappeared in Taraba state; neither the Local Governments nor the State Government is organizing such agricultural shows again. Some local communities may organize small scale events like ‘New Yam’ festival. The only event of such nature that has of recent gained the attention and little support of the State Government is the ‘Nwonyo Fishing

¹⁶ Bank, W. (2010, 07 28). Retrieved 02 04, 2022, from [worldbank.org: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/07/28/fadama-iii-rural-agriculture-project-fast-becoming-a-household-name-in-nigeria](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/07/28/fadama-iii-rural-agriculture-project-fast-becoming-a-household-name-in-nigeria)

Festival' of the Nwonyo people of Ibi Local Government Area in Taraba State. This is a cultural festival celebrated in commemoration of the river goddess for a bountiful fishing harvest in Nwonyo Lake, and it dates back 96 years ago (Events, 2016). Besides the fishing festival/competition which is the main event, other competitions to entertain the guests with include: swimming, boat racing, boat regatta, music and dancing, etc. The person who catches the biggest fish weighed by kilograms is usually commended and a price given. This event has recently attracted so many persons from outside Taraba state, and can be improved to become an economic opportunity for the town and the State at large. Below are some pictures at the Nwonyo Fishing Festival in Ibi, Taraba State.



Finelib.com Accessed 05/02/2022.

There is a great need for the revival or re-introduction of agricultural shows at both the Local Government and State Government levels to encourage both quality and quantity of agricultural products. Since the discovery of oil, the Nigerian Government did less in the development of other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, industrialization, solid minerals and tourism. Instability in the prices of oil in the international market and the incessant destruction of oil pipelines and facilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria led to dwindling revenues, inflation, inability to pay salaries promptly to workers, increase in hunger, rising cost of food stuff, reduced value for the nation's currency, and general rise in poverty and unemployment (Ahmed, 2019). This indicates that a return to agriculture and other non-oil sectors will surely be the game changer in repositioning the economy at all levels of government in Nigeria. A revival of agricultural shows is one sure way to make agriculture more attractive to the teeming unemployed youths in Taraba State and Nigeria.

3.6. HOW COULD EDUCATION BE IMPROVED IN TARABA STATE SO THAT THE NEXT GENERATION HAS THE TOOLS AND MINDSET TO REDUCE POVERTY?

At the heart of achieving a more sustainable world is a good quality education. The reorientation of current education systems as key to sustainable development became a focal point of discussion at the UN World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. This leads to the concept, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The concept of Sustainable Development (SD) is itself a product from a concern about the impact of the society on the natural environment. ESD promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and actions required to create a sustainable world, which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and enhances economic sustainability (Nevin, 2008).

There are some basic objectives, principles and teaching techniques that out to be implemented in order to reduce poverty:

- ESD should be inculcated in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner, which will guarantee a whole institutional approach to policy making.
- The values and principles which define SD should be adequately shared with people in target areas.
- Critical thinking or initiative and problem solving and actions ought to be promoted as a way of building confidence in addressing the problems to SD.
- Diverse methods of education such as literature, art, drama, quiz, and debate should be used to illustrate the processes.
- Learners should be also allowed to be part of the decision making on the design and context of educational programs as it directly relates to them.
- Both local and global issues should be addressed and communicated in the best and simple way possible.
- The future relevance of these processes must be assessed; the context should have a long-term effect and should have a medium and long-term planning (Nevin, 2008)

In the light of this, the UN General Assembly in 2002 decided to initiate the 2005-2014 Decade for ESD led by UNESCO which focused on four main areas:

1. Education should be seen as a critical implementation tool for SD
2. Education should be reoriented towards commitments of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and education. This will ensure that people have the education and learning with the required knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes which empowers them to contribute their respective quotas to a sustainable future.
3. Networking and interaction among different stakeholders in ESD.
4. Developing approaches for assessment of progress in ESD in order to guarantee accountability and transparency (UNESCO, 2021).

If education is to be improved in Taraba State so that the next generation has the tools and mindset to reduce poverty, the following steps must be taken or addressed:

1. The government should ensure that every child is entitled to a free and quality primary education. Relevant laws must also be passed to ban street hawking or exploitative child labour in the state.
2. The State government must ensure that qualified teachers are employed and their salaries promptly paid as at when due. A situation where teachers are owed months of salaries is not acceptable and quality output from them cannot then be guaranteed.
3. Where free secondary education is not feasible, it should be affordable and qualitative. In most cases,

government owned secondary schools offer affordable but not qualitative secondary school education. Only wealthy parents are able to send their children to private secondary schools where the fees are high but with quality education.

4. Standard structures should be erected in schools with adequate and functional sanitary conditions. These structures should also be well secured for boarding students. Recent mass abductions of school children for ransom by terrorists and bandits in Nigeria as a whole has been a clog in the wheel of progress in the education of children. This situation has sometimes led to mass withdrawal of students by parents from such schools and discouraged others from sending their children to those schools.
5. In higher institutions of learning, the mode of payment of tuition should be diversified. The mono-system of once-off payment by the tertiary institutions is a huge challenge for both parents and their children in such institutions. The tuition payment should also be reviewed so that financially challenged students could pay in instalments over a period of time. Some students would usually go into crime or prostitution to raise their tuition and meet other financial demands in these institutions.
6. The governing bodies of the tertiary institutions in the State must also create a transparent system for monitoring and sanctioning of lecturers who extort monies from the students through the exorbitant sales of lecture notes/handouts. Those who fail to buy such handouts are often victimized or made to fail those courses. This monitoring system should also include a system to assess teachers based on their teaching and methods of teaching generally.
7. Taraba State government must ensure the training and retraining of teachers in all tiers of education in order to see that quality and maximum output is guaranteed from them. The general welfare of teachers should constantly be reviewed to meet current economic realities.
8. Taraba State government must also ensure supervision of private schools to ensure compliance with standards and best practices. The situation where these schools are left to go unchecked because they are private schools portends great danger to the educational system in the state. Left unchecked, the proprietors of these schools might engage in unwholesome practices such as collaborative examination malpractices, poor payment of teachers despite charging high fees from pupils or students, under-reporting or not reporting instances of gross abuse of children or students to the appropriate government agencies, refusal to renew school licenses, etc.

At the heart of the fight to end poverty with a guarantee for a sustainable future, is education. Knowing what the challenges are, what ought to be done and acquiring the requisite skills

and abilities to address these challenges are key steps in this fight. And when evaluations are periodically done in a transparent way that guarantees accountability, the quality of education could only continue to be improved and will become a portent tool in the fight against poverty.

3.7. INCREASED BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE PROVISION OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS

One of the basic challenges of the education sector is under-funding. In order to enhance the quality of education in the state, the government should ensure that the budget of the education sector is constantly reviewed upward. The governing bodies of government owned schools and institutions must also complement government's efforts through a judicious utilization of the funds allocated to them in a transparent way and through the creation of initiatives that will raise internally generated income. Information obtained on the Taraba State's approved budget estimates (2018-2021) from the Taraba State Budget Office reveals a gradual increase in the budgetary allocation to the education sector in general and the allocation to the scholarship board, but the state needs to do more in that regards. It will be so great if Taraba State government could take a cue from the commitment made by the President of Nigeria at a recent summit on education held in London. The global summit which was co-hosted by the UK Prime Minister and the President of Kenya aimed at getting leaders to make a 5-year pledge to support the transformation of education in their respective countries. During that summit, President Buhari pledged that, Nigeria is committed to progressively increase its annual domestic education expenditure by 50% over the next two years and up to 100% by 2025 beyond the 20% global benchmark (Aghakwuru, 2021). This commitment, according to Femi Adesina, Special Adviser to the President on Media and publicity is aimed at improving learning outcomes through strengthened educational institutions, encouraging better teaching capacity among others. The statement quoted President Buhari as saying,

I join President Uhuru Kenyatta to state our commitment to improve learning outcomes in our respective countries by ensuring equitable access to quality and inclusive education for all our citizens, with particular reference to the girl child¹⁷

Taraba State government can take a cue from what the Nigerian President has done by increasing funding to the education sector in the state. Scholarship awards to students who excel and those who are financially challenged can greatly improve the education optics of the state, which will lead to better and wider economic opportunities for the citizens and the state as a whole. And besides the increment of funding to the education sector, the government must ensure accountability on the parts of all those designated to utilize

¹⁷ Aghakwuru, J. (2021, 07 28). Retrieved 02 08, 2022, from vanguard.com: <https://www.vanguard.com/2021/07/buhari-promises-50%-budget-increment-for-education-in-2-years/>

such funds on behalf of the state. This is because corruption has been a huge challenge in the utilization of disbursed funds.

In the area of the provision of scholarship, Taraba state has not done well over the years. This can be well attested to by the recent release of a paltry sum of N50 million (\$119,426.086) to address the scholarship needs of deserving indigenes in tertiary institutions across the country (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2022). There is no mention of any provision for Taraba State indigenes studying outside of the country. Compare this to a situation in Kano State for instance, where Kano State government settled the sum of N7 billion (\$16,719,652.04) for their students on foreign scholarships, and this does not include what the Kano State government spends on scholarship for those studying within the country. According to Muhyi Magaji, Chairman, Kano State Public Complaints and Anti-Corruption Commission, the present administration collaborated with this commission in order to monitor the lingering foreign scholarship crisis which was worrisome. Magaji disclosed that, the current government as of today has settled the sum of seven billion naira of foreign scholarship programme inherited from various administrations who initiated the programme. (Nigeria N. A., www.pulse.ng, 2021). Magaji, however, faulted the mode of the disbursement of these scholarships. It was initially handled by the office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Ministry of Higher Education and Scholarship Board but now handled by consultants, who, according to some students, manipulate the disbursement through corrupt practices.

Taraba State must increase allocations for scholarships to its indigenes and should endeavour to send some on scholarship to study in many other countries for variety. This will not only improve quality outputs from such students to the State but will also increase the chances of the indigenes of the State to access various national employment opportunities. This is possibly the reason that only very few Taraba indigenes are often found worthy of federal appointments where other States have a pool of variety from across the world to present.

CHAPTER FOUR (4): Current Information

4.1 PROCUREMENT OF MODERN FARMING MACHINES, TOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES

There is certainly no doubt that farming or agriculture has been as old as humanity. The indigenes of Taraba state are no strangers to agriculture or farming. With vast arable lands, agriculture-friendly weather and hardworking people, various kinds of food and cash crops and livestock are produced across the state in large quantities. Some of these include: yams, tomatoes, cassava, rice, millet, sorghum, maize, groundnuts, potatoes, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, chickens, peppers, various kinds of vegetables, etc. The farming methods are, however, not done through the use of modern mechanized methods and techniques; people often rely on simple, out-dated hand-held tools or implements and free grazing methods for the animals. If agriculture is to be boosted in the state for food and animal production that will not only guarantee food security and sustainability but also for

the economic growth of the state through sells and even export to the international markets, then farming innovations and the procurement of modern farming tools and techniques is the answer. In this process then, the individual farmers are better placed to be economically empowered through increased productivity and more income generation.

Farm machinery, mechanical devices, such as tractors, harvesters, harrowers, weeding/sowing/fertilizer-application machines, etc ensure efficiency, increased yields and save labour. There are diverse applications or uses of these farming implements and machines: for crop production, they include handling of residues from previous crops; primary and secondary tillage of the soil; fertilizer distribution and application; weeding, seed planting, and transplanting; cultivation; pest control; harvesting; transportation; storage; premarketing processing; drainage; irrigation and erosion control and water conservation.¹⁸

It is estimated that there has seen a steady growth in the investment in agriculture technology in the last 10 years; with about \$6.7 billion invested over 5 years and \$1.9 billion just in the last year (Ku, 2021). Major technology innovations in farming have prioritized key areas such as: indoor vertical farming, automation and robotics, livestock technology, modern greenhouse practices, precision agriculture and artificial intelligence, etc. Farm automation for instance, makes farming more efficient and automates the crop or livestock production cycle. Many companies with such innovative farming goals are working on robotics innovation in order to develop drones, autonomous tractors, robotic harvesters, automatic watering and seeding robots, etc. The overall advantages of modern-day innovations in farming range from: increased productivity, saving labour, decreasing injuries and other hazards associated with using simple hand-held farming tools or implements, space management, changing customers' preferences, etc.

Taraba State government should leave no stone unturned to procure some of these modern farming machines and techniques for agricultural purposes. One huge deficit in the state is lack of modern technology for livestock production. The cattle breeders for instance rely on open-grazing, which is not only counter-productive but has been a major source of conflicts between herders and farmers in the state and in many parts of the country as a whole. The Taraba State government could even establish large cattle ranches in major cattle-breeding areas with well-equipped veterinary clinics and rent them to cattle breeders for income generation. The governor of Taraba State, Arch Darius Ishaku sent an executive bill to Taraba State House of Assembly which sought to prohibit open-grazing in the state. After series of public hearing conducted across the three senatorial zones in the state, the bill was passed into law in 2017 (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2017). The passage of the bill was

¹⁸ Britannica, T. E. (2022, 01 01). (R. a. Augustyn, Ed.) Retrieved 02 14, 2022, from britannica.com: <https://www.britannica.com/technology/farm-machinery>

greeted with mixed reactions; while the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association in the state protested the bill, citing a calculated ploy to witch-hunt the Fulani herdsmen in the state, the organized farmers also staged a solidarity protest in support of the bill. But since the passage of that bill, it has not been implemented and the situation has not changed. The bill has failed to be implemented because no alternatives have been provided by the government for the cattle breeders despite also contributing to the economic growth of the state. Many people were of the opinion that the breeders should establish their private ranches, but the timing and the capital needed to do such is not as practicable as many people think. Many have also argued that just as the Taraba State government builds markets, motor parks and rent the stores to private business owners, the same should have been done in the establishment of ranches. If this had been done, the Taraba State government will solve the incessant conflicts between herders and farmers, improve livestock production, boost the economic fortunes of the state and also have the guts to implement the bill.

4.2. PROVISION OF HYBRID SEEDS AND FERTILIZERS

Agriculture has certainly moved away from the traditional or primitive ways of doing the same times with the same things year in year out. Part of the new ways of improving agricultural yields is the production of hybrid seeds and the use of fertilizers on lands that have been pressured through constant farming. In Nigeria, a coalition of groups and foundations did unveil a private for-profit foundation seed entity called “ECOBASIC Seed Company Limited, which is to be producing foundation seed for the Nigerian and West African markets. These groups and foundations are: the African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and the Seed Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (SEEDAN) (Joke Falaju and Ernest Nzor, 2021).

At the unveiling of the ECOBASIC Seed Company Limited, its Managing Director, Mr. Brighton Karume said that Nigeria was on the verge of closing her maize production versus demand gap from the current 10% to 50-100% and that Nigeria could see her maize production doubled from the current 2 metric tonnes per hectare to 4 metric tonnes per hectare, thereby increasing annual production to about 20 million metric tonnes (Joke Falaju and Ernest Nzor, 2021). And the Executive Director of AATF also said that West African nations must prioritize self-sufficiency in agricultural food production and the journey to food security which begins with high quality foundation seed with undiluted purity¹⁹

In the bid to improve agricultural production in terms of both quantity and quality, the National Varieties Release Committee (NVRC) released 49-high-yielding crops in Nigeria. The Chairman of the NVRC, Oladosu Awoyemi said that the decree that set up the committee mandated that

anybody seeking to introduce new varieties of crop into the Nigerian farming community should first send the sample or samples of the crop or crops for vetting and approval. The research team will test the crops across the ecological zones for which it is recommended. When its suitability is ascertained, then it could be officially released upon registration. (Mojeed, www.premiumtimesng.com, 2021). Among the 49 released crop varieties are: 2 rice hybrids namely Arize 6444 Gold and Arize TEJ Gold; 2 high protein-rich oat varieties namely SAMOAT 1 and SAMOAT 2; 3 Durum wheat varieties namely LACRI-WHIT 12D and LACRI-WHIT 13D; 3 pro-Vitamin A hybrids of cassava namely UMUCASS 52, UMUCASS 53, UMUCASS 54; 19 maize varieties namely ILOMAZ 2, HAKIM 1, HAKIM 2, HAKIM 3, DK 7500, SAMMAZ 64,65,66,67, Drought TECO WE8 206, WACQH 6, WAC 55E, WAC 14 M5, among others (Mojeed, www.premiumtimesng.com, 2021).

The advantages of boosting agriculture through getting more farmers to use the hybrid seeds include: improved crop quality and quantity, reduction of capital flight due to the importation of some of these crops, food security, and improved income generation through the export of these crops. The overall effect will then be an improved economy and a stronger naira (Nigeria’s national currency). And while Taraba State may not have the capacity to produce such hybrid seeds, it can take advantage of the ones produced at the national level by making them available for farmers in the state. Taraba State government could even make this more attractive by subsidizing the prices of these hybrid seeds especially for small-scale farmers who might not afford it. And once these farmers see results, they will certainly key-into the scheme with ease.

The provision of fertilizers to farmers by the Taraba State government has severally been met with so many challenges; delay in supply, allegations of corrupt diversion of the farm inputs including fertilizers to black markets, and price hike. The Commissioner of Agriculture and Natural Resources in the state while refuting the allegations of diversion of farm inputs, said that the state government released the sum of N200 million (\$480,898.7). When asked about the delay of the distribution of fertilizers, Mr. David said that the removal of subsidy and the high cost of foreign exchange resulted in the scarcity and price hike of the commodity (Dungs, 2021). Mr. David said that the distribution processes for such farm inputs involves: State Executive Council members, State Assembly legislators, Religious Bodies (Christian Association of Nigeria and Muslim Council in the State), and Traditional Rulers. But many farmers still alleged that politicians and officials of the State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources connive to divert some of these farm inputs to the black markets where they are sold at exorbitant prices beyond the reach of so many small-scale farmers.

Taraba State government must ensure a strong monitoring scheme to supervise such distributions and demand accountability on those charged with the responsibility of distributing such farm inputs. What is the use of fertilizers to farmers when the farming season is over? And most of them

¹⁹ Joke Falaju and Ernest Nzor. (2021, 12 19). Retrieved 02 14, 2022, from [guardian.ng: https://guardian.ng/features/nigeria-gets-new-seed-production-company/](https://guardian.ng/features/nigeria-gets-new-seed-production-company/)

may not have good storage facilities to keep them in good conditions before the next farming season. When these farm inputs are distributed transparently and delivered timely, the agricultural production in the state will be enhanced and more farmers will generate more income.

4.3. EXPORT-INTENT FARMING

Boosting agricultural production in Taraba State and in Nigeria as a whole is first geared towards food sufficiency to eliminate hunger and for the economic empowerment of farmers in order to address the problem of poverty. Other reasons will include: the reduction of capital flight due to importation of agricultural products that could easily be produced in the country, the earning of forex to keep the national currency stable and healthy, and the general enhancement of the economy. This means that farmers must also be educated to engage in export-intent farming. This education is necessary because agricultural products that are to be exported to other countries must go through the required screenings or vetting to ascertain they meet acceptable and safety standards.

Despite the renewed efforts by the government of Nigeria to move away from the mono-driven economy that is largely dependent on the exploration and sell of crude oil and focus on agricultural and mineral sectors, many agricultural products from Nigeria have been rejected from being exported to European countries. This is not only a setback but the image of the country is not positively enhanced. The reasons for the rejection of these agricultural export-bound products include: failure to meet required standards, exporters boycotting regulatory agencies mandated to screen these products, failure of the regulatory bodies to perform their statutory functions, lack of efficient storage facilities to keep these products in good conditions from the time of storage to the time they reach their export destinations, and high percentage of pesticides in some of the products which make them potentially harmful to health if consumed. The Director-general of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Mojisola Adeyeye said that the European Union (EU) has been rejecting over 76% of agricultural products from Nigeria because they fail to meet required standards. She blamed the exporters for boycotting regulatory procedures, maintaining that those products rejected never passed through required screening (Reporter, 2021). Mojisola said,

We've got to work hard to prove our love for this country so that we do not bring disgrace to the country from outside. When somebody exports an agricultural product, saves money, gets loans or whatever and that product meets rejection, it breaks my heart²⁰

The question to be asked then is, "How was it possible for these products to pass through the exit points in Nigeria to other European countries without the detection of the said

regulatory bodies?" Some of the agricultural commodities rejected include: beans, sesame seeds, melon seeds, dried fish, dried meat, peanut ships, groundnut, palm oil, and yam (Akinfewa, 2021). Mr. Akin Sawyerr, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Agricultural Fresh Produce Growers and Exporters Association of Nigeria (AFGEAN) lays the blame for the rejection of these commodities on the regulatory bodies. He maintains that these bodies do not monitor these products despite being given the funds to do so;

They can come and blame the farmers but there are both good and bad farmers, there are honest and dishonest ones; there are some that are not dishonest but they are simply ignorant of the right things to do, but who will educate them?²¹

Ndubueze Okeke, an assistant Director of Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) said that the rejection of agricultural commodities from Nigeria may be due to poor documentation and procedure, insisting that in this kind of business, international food practice and standard must be maintained at all times or continue to face such rejections (Akinfewa, 2021). It is also possible that these exporters collude with some staff of these regulatory agencies to evade screening in exchange for bribes. The regulatory agencies of European countries that have their interest and the safety of their people at heart will not compromise such screenings, hence; reject any commodity that does not meet required standards. Banned beans for instance were found to contain 0.03 mg Kilograms to 4.6 mg/kg of dichlorvos (pesticides) contrary to acceptable limits (Akinfewa, 2021).

Taraba State government could organize seminars and workshop for key farmers in the state and ensure the same seminars or workshops are stepped down in every Local Government in order to educate the farmers about export-intent farming. These farmers should be enlightened about the required and safety standards that agricultural commodities for export are expected to meet. Some farmers simply use a famous rat-poison called 'sniper' to preserve food products like beans. Not only will such products fail export regulatory screening but they are dangerous for human consumption. Good storage facilities for export-bound commodities should be built in the state. This will make farming attractive especially to the youths and enhance their economic opportunities as well as that of the state.

4.4. PROVISION OF AGRICULTURAL LOANS TO FARMERS

In 2015 the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) with three key aims: to enhance agricultural yields, improve foreign exchange and reverse Nigeria's negative balance of trade on food production. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) disbursed the loans to farmers through: Deposit Money Banks (DMBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Microfinance

²⁰ Reporter, S. (2021, 08 14). Retrieved 02 16, 2022, from farmersreviewafrica.com: <https://farmersreviewafrica.com/eu-rejects-over-76-of-agricultural-commodities-from-nigeria>

²¹ Akinfewa, G. (2021, 08 22). Retrieved 02 16, 2022, from guardian.ng: <https://guardian.ng/features/why-rejection-of-agro-commodities-for-export-may-persist/>

Banks (MFBs). The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele said that the bank will develop a repayment framework that will allow farmers to use their farm produce as repayment (Mojeed, www.premiumtimesng.com, 2021). It is such repayment that has led to the recent unveiling of the rice pyramids in Abuja, Nigeria. Despite the teething problems of this initiative and the usual criticisms due to the sudden increase in the prices of some food products especially rice (a huge percentage of which was imported), six years later, the ABP has yielded immense result. At the recent launch of the stacked paddy rice pyramids considered the largest in the world, President Muhammadu Buhari said,

The Anchor Borrowers Programme has since inception supported 4.8 million smallholder farmers in the country for the production of 23 agricultural commodities, including maize, rice, oil palm, cocoa, cotton, cassava, tomato, and livestock. Today Nigeria's rice production has increased to over 7.5 million metric tonnes annually²²

The United States Department of Agriculture's data estimates Nigeria's yearly milled rice production averaged 2.4 million metric tonnes between 1999 and 2015. Production after the ABP initiative, rose from 3.9 metric tonnes in 2015 to 4.5 metric tonnes in 2016 (15% increase). In 2017 and 2018, Nigeria's milled rice production averaged 4.5 metric tonnes and rose to 5.0 metric tonnes (11% increase) in 2019. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the adverse effects of climate change, and insecurity, production decreased to 4.8 metric tonnes but later rose to 5.0 metric tonnes in 2021 (Mojeed, www.premiumtimesng.com, 2022).

Although the Taraba State governor, Darius Ishaku, said that more than 16,000 rice farmers in the state have been empowered by his administration since 2017 with successful outcomes (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2020), there is a need for Taraba State government to adopt the anchor borrowers programme of the federal government for better results. There is no doubt that adopting such a programme and other ways of providing agricultural loans and assistance to farmers will enhance the economic growth of these farmers and that of the state at large.

4.5. VOCATIONAL ENTERPRISE INSTITUTIONS

In order to ensure adequate manpower for the various sectors of the Nigerian economy, reduce unemployment, and provide alternative routes to university education, the federal government of Nigeria established the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 1977. This board is saddled with the task of accrediting and supervising Vocational Enterprise Institutions and all technical institutions in Nigeria; Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Monotechnics also fall under the jurisdiction of NBTE (Naijschools, 2021).

²² Mojeed, A. (2022, 01 19). Retrieved 01 19, 2022, from premiumtimesng.com: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/506666-anchor-borrowers-programme-over-4-8-million-farmers-financed-buhari.html>

It is fact that not all secondary school leavers are able to continue their education in the tertiary institutions as a result of some issues like: lack of resources or funds, inability to make the educational requirements of the tertiary institutions, and the desire of some to pursue the development of their skills and talents in order to pay their bills. The widening gap of the rate of unemployment among graduates with each passing year is a key indicator that developing a skill is a useful alternative. Vocational education equips students with practical experience and technical skills in a specified field; it prepares learners for jobs in manual and practical activities (Golden, 2019). A learner develops expertise in specific trades, crafts, and careers such as: block laying and cementing, fashion designing, electrical installation, carpentry, welding, etc. In fact, there are instances where some employers prefer to hire people who have had vocational training who possess the necessary skills and practical experiences which could save the company or firm the cost of training staff in those areas or skills.

Despite the many advantages of the Vocation Enterprise Institutions, especially in the provision of manpower to the economic sectors of either the state or the country at large, there are currently no accredited Vocation Enterprise Institutions in Taraba State (Naijschools, 2021). There are only a few technical schools in the state which are grossly inadequate for the provision of the needed manpower for the state. Another huge advantage of the presence of Vocation Enterprise Institutions is that students from these institutions easily become self-employed and could even become providers of employment to others, and this is helpful in addressing the huge unemployment deficit in the state. The Taraba State government should make urgent steps to have such institutions present and accredited in the best interest of the citizens and the state also.

The Catholic Diocese of Jalingo for instance, has two Vocational Training Centres: The Women Vocational Training Centre, Mayo Dassa in Jalingo Local Government Area and the Youth Training Centre, Jauro Yinu in Ardo Kola Local Government Area. Disadvantaged girls who could not go to school or who are school drop-outs go to the Women Vocational Training Centre for two years to learn sewing, knitting, baking, and soap making; they are also given some basic education skills that could reignite the desire to return to school after the economic empowerment programme. The Youth Centre on the other hand, admits disadvantaged young men who have not gone to school or are school drop-outs and they learn carpentry, block making and cementing, electrification, and basic computer skills for those who might have had secondary school education. The Taraba State Government could identify such private owned centres and support them in the economic empowerment of the citizens of the state; this is hard to come by as some governments see such private bodies as competitors rather than partners-in-progress.

4.6. E-LEARNING/ONLINE COURSES

The 21st Century has an avalanche of opportunities to enhance education and learning through the internet. The dual mode

universities combine face-to-face (traditional mode) with distance/e-learning modes of delivery; a culture of the university controls assessment processes of the distance/e-learning principles (G.I Akper & C.A Okonkwo, 2021). The dual mode universities have been in place in developed countries for quite a while with great success stories. This system not only creates an alternative for regular students but also gives an opportunity to others who might be employed in various fields of life to take up courses online to enhance their careers; for instance, I live and work in Ireland but I am able to do this Master's Degree program in the Atlantic International University, U.S.A.

No one would have envisaged the shutdown across the globe occasioned by the race to curb the spread of the COVID-19. In many countries where the dual mode universities were in place, many lectures and academic works were delivered online; in fact, some primary and secondary schools had to shift some of their academic activities online. The 20th March 2020 shutdown announced by the federal government of Nigeria paralysed the education sector as universities could not shift online their academic activities due to poor internet infrastructure and a lack of stable power supplies (Okocha, 2020). These are the challenges that impede Nigerian universities from making online learning as an alternative while physical facilities are closed. Omololu Soyombo, a lecturer with the University of Lagos, stressed that, Nigeria's poor internet infrastructure would stall the delivery of lectures online. He said that even if the lecturer is able to arrange to deliver some lectures online, the next problem would be internet accessibility for all the students wherever they may be (Okocha, 2020).

With the recent development of the Eaglescan Plagiarism Detection software by the committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, the next step will be to develop internet infrastructure in the universities and other tertiary institutions in order to improve the quality of learning and research. The Taraba State government should support the education sector in the state to build such internet infrastructure and also to provide enabling environment for network providers to cover the state with quality services. This is necessary so that when the internet facilities are in put in place in the various institutions of learning for the sake of online courses or e-learning, the students will be able to access the courses in their respective places.

There are immense benefits for the education sector when online courses/e-learning is combined with the traditional face-to-face learning that is predominantly the mode of learning in Nigerian institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE (5): Discussions

5.1. HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The major goal of democracy should not just be visible in the formal presence of the various arms or institutions of democracy, but in their functionality in the delivery of the dividends of democracy to all citizens. The sustainability of the delivery of the dividends of democracy largely depends also on human capital investment which is primarily achieved

through education, training and re-training of citizens and government personnel. Democracy is essential to human development because it gives citizens formal rights; the codification of which results in the birth of formal democracy. Effective democracy refers to a situation when formal democracy is deployed to the benefits of the citizens and their rights.

Employers fully or partially fund the training of their employees in the hope of gaining a return on the investment in terms of being more productive, more competitive and consequently more profitable firm in the future. In reality, however, it is difficult to measure these expected returns (Richard Blundell, Lorraine Dearden, Costa Meghir and Barbara Sianesi, 1999). While investments in human capital can offer tremendous benefits, it is often costly and with some human resources investments, firms or companies also risk reaping the rewards in the event of employees jumping ship or changing their job place (Lake), or even in the event of death. The benefits of human capital investment are both for the firm and the individual. In fact, the benefits of education and training may not be limited to the individual (private return) but could have spiral effects on others and on the economy as well (social return) (Richard Blundell, Lorraine Dearden, Costa Meghir and Barbara Sianesi, 1999).

It is worthy of note that the overall benefits of human capital investments far outweigh the possible risks. These benefits include:

- Improved employee retention rates.
- Improved returns on all employee-related costs.
- More reliable workforce data tracking.
- Improved employee prospecting; it is easier for a firm or company to find new recruits if it prioritizes employee development.
- It is easier to detect or identify people with leadership qualities for the future.
- Improved communication and problem-solving qualities.
- More opportunities for advancement among marginalized community members.
- Better client management.
- A more positive work environment
- Training employees for the required skills (Lake)

The Catholic Diocese of Jalingo, Taraba State have a few clinics and one hospital across the state. As part of its human capital investment policy, the diocese considers staff for training either in the College of Health in Takum or the College of Nursing and Midwifery in Jalingo after four years of continuous permanent service. After such training, that staff is required to sign a bond to work in the diocesan health department for five years, after which the staff may wish to continue to work for the diocese or opt out. And in the event that the staff chooses to change a job place before the expiration of the five agreed years of service, the staff will be required to pay the diocese the cost of his/her training (Rokoba, 2022)

Taraba State government should broaden its human capital investments. This should start from a child's early years, because people with better skills, education, health, and training will make great impacts on the state's ability to grow and compete together. This will foster resilience to global shocks including forced displacement, climate change and pandemics which are capable of impeding hard-fought developmental gains. Though grossly inadequate, one recent initiative of the administration of Governor Darius Ishaku on human capital investment is the skill acquisition given to 100 youths in Israel for employment/empowerment. This training was facilitated by a new ministry established in 2020 called "Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (Education, 2020). Such training and sending of students to study in various universities across the globe on scholarship should be sustained and the numbers increased across the three senatorial zones of the state. The benefits on the individuals so educated and trained, on others, and on the state as a whole can better be imagined. On the other hand, failure to massively invest in human capital portends grave danger for the state. The rising cases of unemployment could be a catalyst to rising crime rates and insecurity as some jobless youths become easy recruits for dangerous groups or terrorists.

5.2. POLITICAL WILL TO SUSTAIN GOVERNMENT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS ON EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE

The prospects of breaking the cycle of poverty in Taraba State is largely dependent on the political will to sustain government's plans, policies and programs on education and agriculture. And though, this drive includes partnership with wealthy individuals and groups/organizations, the government must provide the enabling environment for this initiative to thrive and produce the desired fruits. In one of such feasibility studies on a moribund tomato company by German investors in the state, the team leader, Engr. Michael Struve said that the vision of the governor is achievable if only the government of Taraba State has the political will to fulfil its part of the bargain especially in the provision of necessary infrastructure such as roads, water, and power. These are essential components for the survival and sustenance of any viable company (Admin, www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2016).

Although Taraba State has enjoyed some stability in terms of formal democracy, it has had some share of instability in the areas of security; ethno-religious crises and other forms of banditry or kidnapping-for-ransom. This has resulted in loss of lives, displacement of persons and colossal destruction of properties. There is need to first address such challenges resulting from growing instability and persistent fragility; "The challenges of fragile states are inherently political, and therefore, the starting point must be to keep politics at the centre of approaches to address them".²³

²³ Thier, A. (2019, 06 06). *Briefing/Policy Papers*. Retrieved 02 21, 2022, from [odi.org: https://odi.org/en/publications/transforming-fragile-states-forging-a-new-consensus/](https://odi.org/en/publications/transforming-fragile-states-forging-a-new-consensus/)

I am quite certain that Taraba State is not bereft of plans, policies, and programs on education and agriculture, but whether the political will is there to implement these plans, policies, programs, and how to sustain them is another big issue. Most citizens are doubtful of promises made by political leaders as they are hardly fulfilled; and even where some of these promises are implemented, there are hardly plans to sustain them in the future. In some cases, also, succeeding administrations often abandon the plans, policies, and programs of their predecessors for novel ones which are often wasteful and often left uncompleted within the maximum 8-year term of any given administration.

Political will is certainly a fluid term that has been variously defined but focuses on some common idea. Derrick Brinkerhoff defines political will as, the commitment of actors to facilitate actions to achieve a set of objectives...and to sustain costs of those actions over time.²⁴ In simple terms, political will is what determines the success or failure of plans, policies and programs of government. Sometimes government fails because it refuses to engage its citizens in the formation of their plans, policies and programs; the citizens are patronized by the politicians mainly prior to the elections. The success of a government is equally dependent on the cooperation of its citizens towards the implementation and sustainability of its plans, policies and programs; and this is a huge missing link not only in Taraba State but in Nigeria as a whole. There ought to be a paradigm shift in the business of government if democracy is to be truly strengthened and functional.

5.3. RESILIENCE-BUILDING IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

One fact of the human society is that there is always a possibility of some sudden occurrences that could offset the balance of society. These occurrences could be natural or man-made such as natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, drought, etc), pandemics, conflicts or wars leading to unexpected losses and displacements. And while some people may experience difficulty accepting and adjusting to abrupt changes, others adapt and thrive. Resilient people are able to turn 'adverse' events or situations into opportunities for growth and creativity (Rowin); when the going gets tough, it is said, the tough get going.

One of such classical examples is that a number of researches have linked a rise in mental health issues with the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and various restrictions or lockdown associated with the pandemic. Some research evidence shows that the combined effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic and associated restrictions has left approximately one person in every five in the general Irish population (and elsewhere) with increased psychological distress like anxiety and depression. Risk factors include being female and living alone. It was also discovered that the psychological distress among healthcare

²⁴ Marquette, H. (2020, 02 12). Retrieved 02 21, 2022, from [ccsi.columbia.edu: https://ccsi.columbia.edu/news/political-will-what-it-why-it-matters-extractives-and-how-earth-do-you-find-it](https://ccsi.columbia.edu/news/political-will-what-it-why-it-matters-extractives-and-how-earth-do-you-find-it)

workers was twice higher than those in the general population (Kelly, 2020). These findings are likely attributed to triggers like anxiety about the Covid-19 and associated effects like restrictions (such as quarantine and compulsory testing for travellers), job losses, confusion (especially around the vaccine conspiracy theories both for and against), anger, and post-traumatic stress. Particular stressors included: longer quarantine periods, infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, financial losses and stigma (Kelly, 2020).

In Taraba State the most common occurrences that cause displacement of people and hardship are ethno-religious crises, farmers-herders' conflicts, and floods around areas on the riversides. The response from the government has often been reactionary rather than proactive. Displaced persons are often left in school buildings without light, toilets, water, beds to sleep on, mosquito nets, and food. While personal mechanisms for building resilience like changing the narrative of painful events through expressive writing, facing one's fears, practising self-compassion, meditation, and cultivating forgiveness (Newman, 2016) could be very helpful, the State government must create some mechanism for people and communities to build resilience. Accommodating displaced persons in schools for instance, will not only disrupt school activities during school sessions, but makes the displaced persons more vulnerable to diseases and physical/sexual abuse. The State Government could build secured camps equipped with some basic facilities in the event that people are displaced as a result of conflicts or floods.

The Taraba State Government could also go into investment in building ranches and renting them to herders in order to minimize the risks of herders-farmers conflicts. As long as the open-grazing methods is allowed to continue, the chances of these conflicts happening again and again is so high. As earlier pointed out, even the promulgation of the anti-open grazing law has not been implemented because herders have not been offered alternatives and most of them cannot personally build well-equipped ranches.

In the case of healthcare staff or frontline workers experiencing psychological distress or burn-out, making careful rosters, granting leave, provision of incentives, organizational support from employers and, where necessary, psychological first aid could be offered to these workers as way of building resilience in them. People who have to go through sudden or unexpected painful changes in their lives are often left on their own without the needed support of the state. Such abandonment leaves them more broken and more vulnerable. But when they receive some support, their resilience could be boosted, and it is only in such situations that they will be able to see what is perceived or seen as 'adverse' events as an opportunity to grow and branch out in new directions (Rowin).

5.4. ACCOUNTABILITY / TRANSPARENCY

Formal democracy is a system of governance that is characterized by: elected representatives, civil liberties, independent judiciary, organized opposition party (or parties) and rule of law. Through the active involvement of the

citizens in the determination of those who govern them in the various tiers of government, a social democracy is birthed. This implies that there are positive impacts on the society for the common good of all irrespective of class, ethnic backgrounds, race, and creed/religion. It is only when formal democracy is seen to deliver the dividends of democracy that such a democracy can be said to be effective; this demands accountability and transparency on the part of all those involved in that social contract.

Accountability in such a relationship involves expectations that two or more parties have of each other or one another through the provision of information about how these expectations have been met or face the consequences of failing to do so. Hence, answerability and enforcement are the components of accountability, and there ought to be clarity too about who is accountable to whom and how? (Directors, 2019). Transparency engenders accountability; transparency is achieved when information about activities and governance is provided to stakeholders or other persons/groups entitled to have such information. Such information must be accurate, complete and made available in a timely manner.

Too often, the government initiates beautiful policies and programs on education and agriculture for instance, but very poor in the implementation even where funds were disbursed. In many cases, many of such institutions or agencies through which the government uses for the implementation of such policies and programs lack trained professional record managers and as such, records are not filed systematically. This does not only create hurdles when records become due for transfer to archival institutions, as each file then needs to be appraised individually to determine its value, but it also hampers proper accountability and transparency (James Lowry, Justis Wamukoya, 2014).

No matter the beauty of the policies and programs of the Taraba State Government towards the enhancement of education and agriculture towards economic growth, if accountability and transparency is not enshrined and people are not held accountable, where there is failure, the implementation becomes what is known in common Nigerian description as "audio-achievement"; which means "practical failure". There should be systems put in place to ensure accountability and transparency for any policy or program initiated by the government, especially where funds are disbursed for such initiatives. The direct beneficiaries of these initiatives must also be carried along from the formulation stages of these policies and programs to their implementations. The social media outlets and civil protests have been used at various times to expose corrupt practices of government or private firms and accountability and transparency demanded; and in many cases, some of these exposures and demands yielded positive outcomes. Some have also written direct petitions to government agencies established to fight corruption and other related offences, for which some have been arrested, investigated, charged to court and even convicted in some cases. Effective democracy is linked to the active role(s) of the citizens to demand their

rights from those who are saddled with the responsibility of governing them.

5.5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

For any project, program or social initiative, such as focusing on education and agriculture for instance, to thrive and to be sustained into the future, monitoring and evaluation is absolutely necessary. Monitoring and evaluation combines a systematic collation of data and analysis (monitoring) and the assessment of the extent a program or intervention has, or has not, met its objectives (evaluation). Monitoring and evaluation is used to assess the performance of a project, program or social intervention (SOPACT, 2021)

Monitoring primarily focuses on processes which include: when and where activities occur, who delivers them and how many people or entities they reach. It is conducted after the commencement of a programme and continues throughout the programme implementation period. Evaluation on the other hand is focused on expected and achieved accomplishments. The result-chains are then assessed in order to understand achievement or the lack of them. Its main focus centres around the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of interventions and how the interventions contributed to the achieved result (WOMEN, 2010). In 2020 for instance, the Taraba State House of Assembly approved the State Government's request to obtain a credit facility of 1,500,000,000 billion naira (\$3,606,115.97) to facilitate agricultural development in the state. Reading the communication of the governor about the credit facility, the Speaker of the House of Assembly in the State, Joseph Albasu Kunini, said that the state government targets to engage ten thousand youths between the ages of 18-35 so as to boost the commercial production of cassava, soya-beans and cocoa under the Central Bank of Nigeria's Accelerated Agricultural Development Scheme (Gbaoron, 2020). The governor also hopes that through such engagement, the menace of unemployment, rural-urban migration and food insecurity will be curbed.

What are the systems or mechanisms put in place to monitor and evaluate such an intervention? Who are those to be tasked with the implementation of this intervention? How will the citizens know if the target number of ten thousand youths is achieved or not? What is the guarantee for the sustainability of this intervention if it is successful? These are some critical questions that ought to be addressed otherwise the debt profile of the state will escalate, the primary purpose of such an intervention will not be met, and there will be no hope of continuity or sustainability. Whatever policies, plans or programmes embarked by the state government in the areas of education and agriculture (and in all other areas or sectors too), an efficient system of monitoring and evaluation must be first put in place with a guarantee of serving the purpose for which it was created.

5.6. FEEDBACK

With a business firm for instance, the essence of getting feedback is to sustain customer's satisfaction and to see ways to improve on areas which need improvements. Feedback is

not necessarily positive; it could be negative – so as to draw attention to certain aspects or areas of services delivered which were found wanting or in need of improvement. Some firms develop rating scale of 1-10 or 1-5 stars on different areas covered in the service(s) rendered. The search for divergent ways of giving and receiving feedback assumes that feedback is always useful. But the primary reason it is pursued is to help people or firms or entities do better (Marcus Buckingham, Ashley Goodall, 2019). Sometimes the reliability of those giving the feedback is questioned and that may not be of any benefit or even be misleading. Feedback is said to occur when outputs of a system come back as inputs, as part of a cause-and-effect that forms a circuit or loop (Wikipedia).

For any project or intervention embarked upon by the Taraba State Government, in this case, in the area of education and agriculture, a system of getting feedback from target persons or communities should be put in place. It is through getting feedback from target persons or communities that the government is able to know between the 'perceived need' and the 'real need' of the people or community; while the government could perceive that the need for a particular community is to site a telecommunication network there, their real need may actually be lack of a clean drinking water or a health facility. The success or lack of success of a project or intervention could largely be assessed by getting feedback from those who are direct beneficiaries; and in through that, changes could be made or alternative plans or methods used or if need be, plans for sustainability will be made. If carefully planned or done, a good system giving or receiving feedback can be both beneficial to the government and to the target citizens as well.

CHAPTER SIX (6)

CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge, it is said, is power. While poverty has many factors causing or influencing it, it could be sustained, perpetuated or become a cycle by the 'poverty of the mind' or lack of access to education. Education not only opens doors to an avalanche of opportunities but also gives one the insight to do same things in different ways with better outcome or results. At a recent global education summit, a youth activist, Farrah shares her key message,

I am the same child who needs education to fully explore my economic and social potential, who will grapple with the effects of climate change, who needs to be safe and healthy and well-fed to live a full life²⁵

The adverse effects of the Covid-19 especially on the education sectors in most developing countries with no online alternatives should provide an opportunity for governments and education policy makers in those places to think anew. Some actions such as: diversification of learning,

²⁵ Partnership, G. (2021, 07 28-29). GLOBAL EDUCATION SUMMIT:FINANCING GPE 2021-2025. London.

transformation of the child's learning journey, an education system better suited for children, and a better and more patronage of technology should be explored. No child should be left behind in the education coverage of every government as this is very vital in the fight against the cycle of poverty.

It is a scandal that Taraba State with all its immense potentials in the areas of agriculture, tourism and mineral reserves was rated as one of the two states with the highest number of people living below the poverty line. There is nothing most needed to confront this negative optic than a carefully planned and funded educational and agricultural revolution; and failure to do this will only make poverty perpetuate in families and communities. It is certainly true that Taraba State Government cannot solve all the problems of the state in the areas of education and agriculture, or other areas, but with the right political will and a robust partnership with wealthy individuals and groups in these areas, so much can be achieved towards this global race to end extreme poverty by 2030. This is a possible race to win as expressed by the Vice President of the World Bank Group for East Africa and Pacific, Victoria Kwakwa, I believe it is feasible to end extreme poverty by 2030 and boost shared prosperity among the poorest 40% in every country (McConville, 2020).

The essence of the interventions or projects of the Taraba State Government should basically be aimed at helping families achieve self-sufficiency and create wealth for themselves. Sometimes governments fail because they are too focused on the provision of the basic needs of the citizens without addressing the issues that create or influence such needs. Improving the quality of education through adequate funding, building infrastructure in schools and institutions of learning, employing qualified teachers and keeping them up-to-date through further training, building the manpower base of the state through the establishment of skills acquisition institutes or centres, and investment in mechanized agriculture and other modern methods and techniques of farming are some vital tools to break the cycle of poverty in the state. When families or communities have the resources or the means to create wealth, not only will such families be transformed but the economy of the state will also be healthy.

It is also for the good of the state that its teeming population who are mostly in the youth category have alternatives to wealth and even job creation, rather than have so many of them scrambling for few available jobs. And the more the youths are engaged in some form of wealth creating jobs, the less likely they will be easy recruits to terrorists and other criminal gangs in the society. Poverty is a menace that ought to be fought from all fronts with all available methods or strategies for a better and more secure society.

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