



Entrepreneurship and Poverty Eradication in Akwa-Ibom State: An Appraisal

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Abstract: One of the major challenges facing Akwa-Ibom State is poverty. This is due to the high rate of unemployment especially among the youths. With over 52 percent of the youth in the State unemployed and poor, entrepreneurship becomes an alternative means to not only traditional economic development strategies and policies but also as the best strategy for eradicating poverty. This paper aims at examining the importance and challenges of entrepreneurship in poverty eradication as well as strategies for promoting entrepreneurship among Akwa Ibomites. Data was gathered from secondary sources such as relevant books and internet materials. Findings indicated that entrepreneurship have significant effects on poverty eradication. The paper concluded that poverty goes beyond lack of resources. It extends to malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to safe drinking water, education, health care, social inequality, insecurity, total lack of opportunity for personal growth and self-realization. These problems can only be remedied through the development of entrepreneurship skill among the citizens. The study recommended among others that entrepreneurship development should be inculcated into the school's curriculum to promote human empowerment and development through entrepreneurial education and training.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Poverty, Eradication, Unemployment, Poverty Eradication

1. INTRODUCTION

ENTREPRENEURSHIP has increasingly gained the attention of many governments as an alternative strategy for poverty eradication. This is due to the believed that entrepreneurial development does not only have direct positive impact on the masses but equally generates greater returns to the public than other alternative strategies such as industrial recruitment, or retention and expansion. According to Umoh (2022), entrepreneurial skills are require to reduce poverty, create income and employment opportunities, promote sustainable business environment as well as build institutional and human capacities that will encourage and support

sustainable development. Similarly, Ogundele (2007) held that the promotion and development of entrepreneurial activities would aid the dispersal and diversification of economic activities and induced even development which plays significant roles in poverty eradication. Entrepreneurship development equips the people with skills for constant improvement and innovation. It is therefore, universally acknowledged that entrepreneurship is an important stimulant of economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development as well as poverty eradication in Akwa Ibom State.

Akwa Ibom State is face with the challenges of high rate of poverty although there are several entrepreneurship opportunities in the state. This has been attributed to the high rate of unemployment that characterizes the state. The realization of the full potential of these opportunities has driven successive governments to come out with many industrial intervention policies aimed at stimulating and promoting entrepreneurship development. Between the year 2015 and 2022, over 85,000 entrepreneurs have been trained, certified and empowered with start-up funds through entrepreneurship empowerment programmes like Women Agro Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WAEDEP), My Entrepreneurship Goal Programme (MEGP) and Akwa Ibom State Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (AK-CARES) Programme. Despite these efforts, there is still widespread of poverty in the state especially among the rural dwellers. The situation keeps on deteriorating up to this moment (Evans, 2019). It is therefore imperative at this point in time to critically evaluate not just the principles of entrepreneurship but the practice and its crucial role in fostering economic growth and development.

Presently, the state's economy is characterized by low industrial capacity utilization, deteriorating infrastructural facilities, rising level of unemployment and poverty (Bale, 2017). With over 51 percent of the citizens in the state unemployed and poor, entrepreneurship programmes need to be properly harnessed to positively engage school leavers while providing employment opportunities to the masses. This study is therefore undertaken to appraise the relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty eradication in Akwa Ibom State.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the major challenges facing Akwa Ibom State is poverty. This is due to the high rate of unemployment especially among the youths. Although more than 85,000 young entrepreneurs have been trained and certified in Akwa Ibom State between 2015 and 2022 through Women Agro Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WAEDEP), My Entrepreneurship Goal Programme (MEGP) and Akwa Ibom State Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (AK-CARES) Programme, majority of

citizens still live in extreme poverty. Despite the state's relative oil wealth, proceeds from the monthly allocation from federation account, excess crude oil and internally generated revenue, reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022) pegged the state's unemployment rate at 51 per cent and the misery index indicated that 71.3 percent of Akwa Ibom citizens are economically backward. This was calculated by adding the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate to the May, 2022 inflation rate (Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 2022). Being an oil producing state, there is little employment of manpower due to her capital-intensive nature. The oil sector contributes less than five percent to employment with high populations and low business attractions for investors (Ndidi, 2018).

Although the government has adopted various measures to address the high poverty incidence in the state, the nonchalant attitude of government officials towards the funding of entrepreneurial training is always a big challenge. Whenever fund is approved, it is sometimes diverted or it is not released on time, and when released at all, the corrupt officials will demand for certain percentage resulting to insufficient funds for the implementation of the programme (Kara and Potter, 2008).

There is also the issue of lack of access to capital for entrepreneurial programmes. Worst still, banks are reluctant to grant credit facilities to entrepreneurs without adequate collateral or securities. The lack of fund to start business places limitation on entrepreneurship development in the state. This capital will aid in the registration and training of people to develop their businesses, thereby creating employment in the process (Como, 2018). There are also inconsistencies and unfavourable government policies which equally constitute major setbacks to entrepreneurial programmes. New administrations always come with new policies which, sometimes adversely affect the profitability of business owners. Also the processes of getting permits, carrying out registrations, and obtaining licenses are needlessly tedious due to protocols in place or corruption (Kelvin, 2008).

Entrepreneurs need training and regular orientation to innovate always. This should happen in a

conducive operating environment (Lucas, 2015). If basic infrastructural facilities that aid training are still in poor state as they are, the trainers cannot do anything about entrepreneurial training. For example, power supply is epileptic in the state and at times, power is completely out for days. On the basis of this, this paper examines the major challenges to the roles of entrepreneurship in poverty reduction.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts the Max Weber “theory of social change” to explain the relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty eradication in Akwa Ibom State. The central figure of this theory consists in his treatment of the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. According to Max Weber (1964), entrepreneurial growth is dependent upon ethical value system of the society concerned. The spirit of rapid industrial growth depends upon rational use of technology, acquisition of money and its rational use for productivity and multiplication of money. These elements of industrial growth depend upon a specific value orientation of individuals, i.e., the tendency of acquisition and rational attitude towards actions which are generated by ethical values.

Weber analyzed his theoretical formulation by the relationship that he found between protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. He found his thesis true about other communities also. He held that Protestants progressed fast in bringing capitalism because their ethical value system provided them with rational economic attitude, while the Jews failed to develop industrial capitalism because of the value of ‘partita’ (the restriction on having any contact with other communities). Furthermore, the ‘spirit of capitalism’ shaped attitudes towards the acquisition of money and the activities involved in it. This spirit of capitalism could be generated only when mental attitude in the society is favourable to question of wealth and protestant ethic provided this mental attitude. For people who believed in this belief (Protestant ethic), hard-work in life was not only to enable them to have their worldly desires met but also to have their spiritual needs satisfied (Tutor, 2023).

This paper adopts this model on the assumption that no entrepreneurship programme or an entrepreneur can succeed without proper orientation and training in line with the ethical values of such programme. This is the only means

entrepreneurs can develop positive mental attitude towards the entrepreneurship programme for poverty reduction. However, societal values play significant roles in the success of any business. The orientation or training given to the entrepreneurs by the Akwa Ibom State government practically brought out the values of the programmes in line with the agenda of the government to eradicate poverty.

4. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

4.1 Entrepreneurship

There is a consensus among entrepreneurship scholars that entrepreneurship is not just running a small business that already exists rather, it includes management, creative thinking, opportunity seeking, and innovativeness. It is summarily considered as self-employment perpetuated by an entrepreneur. According to Imaga (2002), an entrepreneur is someone who brings things like money, materials and labour together in new business, productive process or improved organization to ensure business success by perhaps creating something new. Patti (2018) views an entrepreneur as someone who creates new combinations of production factors such as new methods of production, new products, new markets, finds new sources of supply and new organizational forms and is someone who is willing to take risks, or a person who, by exploiting market opportunities, eliminates disequilibrium between aggregate supply and aggregate demand, or as one who owns and operates a business.

Entrepreneurship is the ability and readiness of an entrepreneur to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. The entrepreneur is defined as someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits (Byjus, 2023).

Entrepreneurship is also conceptualize as the identification of a new business opportunities and the mobilization of economic resources to initiate a new business or regenerate an existing business, under the conditions of risks and uncertainties, for the purpose of making profits under private ownership. It involves a process which may develop a single entrepreneur or enterprise with the main objective of making profit by using scarce resources (Evans, 2019).

Entrepreneurship is also concerned with creating long term value and regular cash flow streams on an individual or a group of individuals for the future through the process of imagination, initiative and innovation for the purpose of maximizing profits and minimizing risk with the view of long term expansion. With this, entrepreneurship remains the key to the growth and development of local industries through the processing of local raw materials into finished and semi-finished goods for the domestic and foreign markets. It also promotes the utilization of improved and cost-effective technology in small and medium-scale enterprises which enhances higher factor productivity at the local level especially in low-income countries where the traditional rural economy is predominant (Ali and Ali, 2017).

According to Havert (2021), entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. It includes a process whereby an individual or a group of individuals use organized efforts and means to pursue opportunities to create value and grow by fulfilling wants and needs through innovation and uniqueness, no matter what resources are currently controlled.

To Abonahor (2009), entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. It is the effective manipulation of human intelligence, as demonstrated in a creative performance and an unrehearsed combination of economic resources instigated by the uncertain prospect of temporary monopoly profit.

Tijan – Alaniye (2016) defines entrepreneurship as the process of increasing the supply of entrepreneurs or adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture, grow and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio – economic development goals.

For Ossai (2008), entrepreneurship is the process of creating some new or different values by devoting the necessary time, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of most personal satisfaction. It is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and aligning them with management and organizational skill in

order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby, creating wealth.

It is therefore, universally acknowledged that entrepreneurship covers immense potentials that can stimulate economic growth and sustainable development.

4.2 Poverty

Poverty is among the most familiar and enduring of human conditions. Umoh (2022) pointed out that despite the rising discovery of natural resources and unprecedented prosperity of nations, mass poverty continued to exist especially in areas such as Africa. As contain in Britannica Dictionary (2023), poverty is seen as the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. It exists when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. In this case, the identification of poor people first requires a determination of what constitutes basic needs. These may be defined as narrowly as “those necessary for survival” or as broadly as “those reflecting the prevailing standard of living in the community.” The first criterion would cover only those people near the borderline of starvation or death from exposure; the second would extend to people whose nutrition, housing, and clothing, though adequate to preserve life, do not measure up to those of the population as a whole. Poverty is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter.

According to the World Bank Organization (2009),

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action - - for the poor and the wealthy alike - - a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education

and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities. Extreme poor are those living on less than \$1.90 a day.”

The World Bank defines those living under US\$2 a day as living in poverty, and those living under US\$1.25 as living in extreme poverty internationally. The nature of poverty differs in all societies. But generally, the poor in every society are those which of the prevailing standards are found to be deficient in means of subsistence and privileges of life. Poverty is related to deprivation, want or lack, suffering and denials of even the basic things of life. It then follows that a poor man cannot be said to have peace since he has to work hard to earn a living, sustaining anxiety, frustration and despair. Salem (2015) refers to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs, which means that there is an inadequate level of consumption giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and/or shelter, and regrettably, the lack of certain capacities, such as being able to participate with dignity in society.

Furthermore, Olayemi (1995) refers to the poor as those having no access to the basic necessities of life such as food, clothes, economic obligation, skillful employment, economic assets and lack self-esteem. In the opinion of CBN (1999), attributes of poverty may be classified into structural, economic, social and cultural deprivation. These dimensions of poverty exhibit a vicious cycle and account for the recurring decimal of poverty. Thus, poverty means living on less than a dollar per day or the inadequacy of opportunities for access to education, health, transport and productive employment.

To Misango and Ongiti (2013), poverty is categorized as both absolute and relative. It is absolute because it is describe as lack of resources to meet the physical needs for survival, a lack of basic security, the absence of one or more factors that enable individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. On the other hand, relative poverty can be described in relation to particular groups or areas in relation to the economic status of other members of the society which is interpreted as lack of resources to achieve a standard of living that allows people to

play roles, participate in relationships, and live a life that is deemed normative of the society to which they belong. Poverty results from and even consists of a lack of basic securities, which not only include financial resources, but also education, employment, housing, health care and other related aspects leading to deprivation.

5. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Adofu, I. and O. Akoji in 2013 assessed the impact of entrepreneurship skill acquisition on poverty in Kogi State of Nigeria. They used structured questionnaires for collecting primary data from six Local Government Area of the state and used descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. They found that 65% of the respondents accepted that lack of entrepreneurship skills among youth is responsible for the high rate of poverty in Kogi state, Nigeria. The result also revealed that at least 60% of the people that benefitted from the skill acquisition programme can afford the basic necessity of life.

Kanitkar in 1994 conducted case studies from 86 village-based entrepreneur and micro enterprise owners in different regions of rural India. He examined the process of emergence of successful entrepreneurs and owners of micro-enterprises in rural areas. He used case survey method for collection of data with a semi-structured questionnaire followed by an open-ended interview from the entrepreneur. He found that based on socio economic profile of entrepreneurs, they were motivated for shifting from an agriculture-based occupation to a non-farm activity, raising resources for their enterprises and entry of the village-based entrepreneurs into a business activity.

Kodithuwakku, S. S. and P. Rosa in 2002 conducted a research based on a qualitative case study of Sri Lankan villagers. They tried to examine the nature and role of entrepreneurial processes in the success of the Mahaveli rural entrepreneurs. They found that after 10 years most of the commercially successful farmers had succeeded in adding new ventures to their portfolio of income-generating activities engaging in an average of 3.7 ventures each. They also found that the successful farmers were not only successful as farmers, but had also diversified into other business ventures.

Ezeanyeji, Imoagwu and Ejefobihi in 2019 conducted a research on the synergy of

entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Both the quantitative and qualitative measurements attest to the growing incidence and depth of poverty in the country. The paper concluded that, government and its agencies should focus on ways of encouraging entrepreneurial culture and skill in order to reduce poverty level in Nigeria and bring about more equitable distribution of income and wealth thereby leading to sustainable economic growth.

Hussain, Bhuiyan and Bakar (2014) conducted an empirical review on entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation. The study was a general search to accumulate empirical literatures by the name of entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation in different online database sources such as Google Scholars, Springer Link, Wiley, Science Direct, JSTOR, Emerald full text, Scopus, and EBSCO HOST etc. It was found that innovation, entrepreneurship training and education, family background, government support program, social entrepreneurship, women participation, individual entrepreneurial characteristics, participation of micro, small & medium enterprises, youth empowerment, collaboration of government-university-industry are key tools for entrepreneurship development which stimulate employment and eventually alleviate poverty. Training in entrepreneurship and provision of other facilities could give poor owners of micro and small enterprises opportunities to grow their businesses and get themselves and others out of poverty.

6. APPRAISAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMES AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN AKWA IBOM STATE

6.1 Akwa Ibom State Poverty Profile

Data published by the Global Data Lab (GDL) (2022) and the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (2022) are used for the analysis of poverty rate in Akwa Ibom State. Global Data Lab (GDL) is an independent data and research center at the Nijmegen School of Management of Radboud University with the mission of bringing together all available household surveys for low- and middle-income countries and integrating them into one encompassing data infrastructure.

Global Data Lab conducted an assessment on wealth, poverty and assets of households in Nigeria to provide an overview of the major social and economic characteristics of the country and states. The results of the assessment on Akwa Ibom State are presented thus:

Global Data Lab Assessment on Wealth, Poverty and Assets of Households in Akwa Ibom State

INDEX INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of mean international wealth index	48.6	49.2	50.4	51.0	51.6	52.3	52.9
% of poor household (with IWI value under 70)	85.8	85.3	84.2	83.7	83.2	86.6	82.1
% of poorer households (with IWI value under 50)	53.3	52.9	52.0	51.5	51.0	50.6	50.1
% of poorest households (with IWI value under 35)	24.3	22.9	20.1	18.8	17.4	16.0	14.6
Percentage on Household Items							
% of households with TV	64.2	62.8	59.9	58.5	57.1	55.6	54.2
% of households with refrigerator	27.2	27.7	28.7	29.1	29.6	30.1	30.5
% of households with cell phone	83.1	84.3	86.6	87.8	88.9	90.1	91.2
% of households with electricity	69.2	70.4	71.5	72.6	73.7	74.8	77.1

Global Data Lab (2022)

From the data in the table above, seven years assessments of people affected by poverty were done in three categories- poor, poorer and poorest. Those under the poor category are those who can take care of their basic needs. The young entrepreneurs with micro business fall here. The poorer are those who cannot satisfy their basic needs always. The poorest are those who lean on others for their survival. Regarding the household items, very few persons are able to purchase refrigerator from the assessment made for the seven years.

Data published by the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) (2022) from the reports of the survey coordinated by the National Social Safety-

Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), contained in the National Social Register (NSR) indicated 51.0% unemployment rate and 16.7% underemployment rate in Akwa Ibom State (MPI, 2022). The multidimensional indicator of poverty among households in the state using education, water, housing and assets are presented in the table below:

Poverty Survey in Akwa Ibom State by Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022)

S/N	Indicator	Not Deprived	Deprived
1	Deprivation in education attainment for people aged 10 years and above who have not completed six years of school	74%	26%
2	Deprivation in school attendance for school-aged children	82%	18%
3	Distribution of households deprived in sanitary facilities	30%	70%
4	Distribution of households by deprivation in access to clean drinking water	36%	64%
5	Distribution of households by deprivation in housing materials—roofing	45%	55%
6	Distribution of households by deprivation in housing materials—flooring	32%	68%
7	Distribution of households by deprivation in cooking fuel	1%	99%
8	Distribution of households by deprivation in ownership of assets	15%	85%

Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022)

From the table above, apart from the educational attainment in which children are not deprived of, citizens are deprived of other items for assessment—example, sanitary facilities, access to clean drinking water, housing materials (roofing and flooring), cooking fuel and ownership of assets.

6.2 Programmes for entrepreneurship development and poverty eradication in Akwa Ibom State

Efforts have been on-going in the state to fashion some programmes for entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction. A number of these programmes have been in place to improve basic services, like infrastructural facilities for all, extending access to credit facilities and creating employment. This paper will consider three major entrepreneurship programmes for poverty reduction in Akwa Ibom State such as women agro entrepreneurship development programme (WAEDEP), my entrepreneurial goal programme (MEGP) and Akwa Ibom covid-19 action recovery

and economic stimulus programmes (AK-CARES).

A. Women Agro Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WAEDEP):

WAEDEP is a policy established in 2013 by the administration of Governor Godswill Obot Akpabio to encourage and boost women entrepreneurship as a means of eradicating poverty in the state, especially among women. The aims of this programme are to empower women economically and increase their strength as well as position; contribute to increased capacity for improved entrepreneurship to reduced poverty for women in a sustainable way; improve entrepreneurship skills; build capacity in entrepreneurship and technical skills for living standard improvement.

Records by Umanah (2014) have shown that since its start, the government have committed over N2 billion to thousands of women at the rate of N250,000 each. As a confirmation, the State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources through Obop (2014), who was the Head of Information, said that government had given N250, 000 to each beneficiary under Women Agro Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WAEDEP). 70 percent of the beneficiaries of the programme who were given the grants are involved in animal husbandry while others are into crop production, marketing and processing.

Despite the achievement of this programme, problems such as nepotism, lack of follow-up and change of government administration hinder its end target.

B. My Entrepreneurial Goal Programme (MEGP):

MEGP is an entrepreneurial development training programme whose focus is to identify, train, certify and empower entrepreneurs with a start-up capital. The government through MEGP train and empower new and existing entrepreneurs in basic business tools, information and communication technology and entertainment, define clear goals for their businesses, provide the right network for partnership and educate them on basic business tool which can guide them in making decisions for their businesses (Anwana, 2022).

From its creation, MEGP has helped Akwa Ibom start-up and growing entrepreneurs define their

goals and objectives, rather than stay afloat without prerequisite knowledge and mentorship. As such, it has identified the business needs of thousands of Akwa Ibom youths and offered lasting solutions to them. It further creates innovative and scalable business by offering continuous learning, networking and providing access to funding which entrepreneurs require to succeed in global market. Currently in Akwa Ibom, more than 600 entrepreneurs have been trained through MEGP. After trainings, the entrepreneurs are expected to effectively communicate the ideas behind their business brands to qualify for business grants ranging from N500,000 to N150,000. In the last batch of the training in which the government introduced Business Strategy Simulation game where all participants were expected to share what and how they will invest their grants, a donation of twenty thousand naira (20, 000NGN) was given to all participants in the competition apart from the winning group who received two million naira (2,000,000 NGN) (Anwana, 2022).

At the programme, entrepreneurs have an access to MEGP training, mentorship opportunities, network and the ability to raise capital. They are able to browse through mentorship request and connect with founders to support them, as well as program partners and are also able to discover great companies, opportunities and follow up with the founders directly (Anwana, 2022).

Unfortunately, even if the programme is still progressing, it still suffers from nepotism, lack of follow-up and insufficient funding. The process of selecting participants are somehow rigid and in most cases, on recommendations.

C. Akwa Ibom Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Programmes (AK-CARES): The AK-CARES programmes which were officially launched in Akwa Ibom state on 29th August, 2022 has been on-going across various platforms such as social transfer, FADAMA, AKROIMA, CSDA, and SMEs. The AK-CARES is an emergency operation, designed to support budgeted programme of expenditure and interventions at the state level. The target is on the existing and emerging vulnerable and poor households, agriculture value chains, entrepreneurship and Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the start, Akwa Ibom state government disbursed 20, 000 covid-19 action recovery and economic stimulus to 1,950 beneficiaries. This is to be done bi-monthly to help many citizens to come out of poverty. In addition, government also disbursed N31 million to 401 entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to support their businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds were to revive entrepreneurs who suffered the adverse effects of the COVID-19 scourge on their businesses (Etim, 2022).

According to Udonquak (2020), the federal government has disbursed over N993 million to 24,929 vulnerable households in 9 local governments (Eastern Obolo, Ikono, Mkpato Enin, Nsit Atai, Nsit Ubium, Onna, OrukAnam, Ukanafun and Uruan) in Akwa Ibom state under its Conditional Cash Transfer programme. Beneficiaries received between N30,000 and N40,000. The programme is still on-going but many entrepreneurs are not succeeding due to lack of follow up on the part of the government. Also, the amount disbursed to each entrepreneur is not sufficient to meet up with the present economic and market realities.

6.3 Policy Implications of Entrepreneurship Policy in Akwa Ibom State

Entrepreneurship policies in Akwa Ibom State, to an extent, have significant implications on economic development and poverty eradication. Entrepreneurial activity helps create new jobs, fosters innovation, and drives market competition, which ultimately benefits citizens. Significant implications are seen, among others, thus:

a. Creation of new jobs: Through WAEDP, MEGP and AK-CARES, the policy helps to create employment opportunities for entrepreneurs. This helps to reduce unemployment rates and improve the overall economic well-being of the state.

b. Eliminate poverty in some local communities: By the implementation of the policy, entrepreneurship programs help to create new businesses and jobs as well as provide opportunities for people to improve their financial situation.

c. Improve standard of living: One of the most significant benefits of entrepreneurship policy in Akwa Ibom State is that it improves the standard of

living of citizens. By creating new businesses and jobs, the quality of life for both individuals and communities is improved by enabling paths for wealth creation (Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Development, 2023).

d. Increases Per Capita Income: Implementation of entrepreneurship policy in Akwa Ibom leads to an increase in per capita income. This is particularly important due to the fact that poverty and unemployment are major issues in the state. Though still on the surface, entrepreneurship can help to reduce regional disparities and promote overall development.

e. Provides economic independence: Implementation of entrepreneurship policy in Akwa Ibom, to an extent, provides economic independence for individuals. By establishing and supporting entrepreneurs, they are able to generate income and contribute to the overall economic well-being of their community. This is particularly important for developing countries, where economic power is often concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations (Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Development, 2023).

6.4 Challenges of Entrepreneurship in Poverty Eradication in Akwa Ibom State

Entrepreneurship is one of the essential pillars whose roles enhance trade balance, job employment and tax revenue generation. The services of an entrepreneur play a significant role in poverty eradication. For enterprises to succeed, adequate infrastructural facilities such as good road networks, reliable electricity, and adequate water supply must be provided. Unfortunately, these are lacking in most areas of the state. Most businesses are not accessible, which most times lead to spoilage of perishable goods and equally limits the reach of service providers (Ekong, 2017).

Businesses survive in an environment where policies are consistent and favourable and nepotism is a sideline. Regimes are known for overturning policies put in place by previous regimes. This tends to put business ventures in a state of confusion which adversely affects the profitability of business owners. Example is the policy on newly design naira cash swap which has made many entrepreneurs to fold their businesses because of scarcity of naira (Odeh, 2016).

Many young entrepreneurs lack patience and commitment to the growth of their businesses even when grants are given to them. A successful

enterprise calls for a lot of patience and resilience. Entrepreneurs need to be regularly reoriented and invest some commitment into their new ventures.

For any entrepreneurial venture to take off, there must be sufficient capital to cater for the wide-ranging start-up costs. Initial start-up costs most times include premise fees, licenses, opening stock, logistics, business registration, hiring, etc. making it difficult for the available resources to be effectively used (Ossai, 2008).

To become an entrepreneur is one thing, but to have the required skill to boost the enterprise is another. A successful entrepreneurial service largely depends on its founders' understanding of numerous aspects of the modern-day business environment- how to place and promote product or service, who to hire, where to market, what to charge, where to source materials, and so on (Benjamin, 2017).

6.5 Prevalent issues affecting Entrepreneurship and Poverty Eradication in Developing Countries

There are several prevalent issues affecting entrepreneurial development in developing nations like Nigeria. Few among such issues include:

1. Lack of access to fund: Fund is needed to execute entrepreneurship ideas. Accessing funds/loans from banking institutions are always challenging due to collateral and a substantial credit history requirements. Also, the lack of a well-developed financial infrastructure makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to access alternative forms of financing, such as venture capital or crowd funding (Sani, 2023).

2. Lack of infrastructures: There is lack of infrastructure needed to support business growth, such as reliable electricity, efficient transportation systems, and modern communication networks. The ones with little access are expensive. For instance, the start-up of SMEs by entrepreneurs need to heavily rely on generators which require fuel and diesel. The cost of supplying power to the business becomes a major issue as the expense of availing these necessities take a huge toll on the businesses. Also, poor roads have a direct impact on effective movement of goods within the country. Due to the challenges with the obstacle of terrible roads, movement of goods and service are

affected. This also creates issues of service delivery in various business sectors (Sani, 2023).

3. Poor internet and digital advancement: Generally in developing countries, there is backwardness in technological advancement. Unfortunately, entrepreneurs need digital platforms for brand awareness, marketing as well as trade in this digital age. Several entrepreneurs need the internet to transact money and respond to their clients or partners, and in most cases where the connectivity is poor, some deals are usually cancelled including the ones made at an international level or with partners from foreign countries.

4. Lack of formal education and training: The importance of education in any society cannot be over emphasised. Many entrepreneurs and SMEs in developing countries lack the education and training needed to successfully start and run a business. This can make it difficult for them to understand market trends, identify opportunities, and develop effective business strategies.

5. Lack of Access to International Market: Many entrepreneurs in developing countries are unable to export their products due to a lack of knowledge about international markets, lack of resources and support to navigate the complex regulations and logistics involved in exporting (Sani, 2023).

6. Political and policies instability: Unpredictable policy changes and lack of governance can make it difficult for entrepreneurs to make long-term business decisions and plans. In most developing countries, weak blueprints for development or policy continuity; hence the system changes as it pleases the individuals without consideration of different small businesses in the country.

6.6 Issues affecting Entrepreneurship and Poverty Eradication in Developed Countries

There are several prevalent issues affecting entrepreneurial development in developed nations like Nigeria. Few among such issues include:

1. Warfare/Conflict: Warfare and conflict disrupt and stall financial markets and economic growth, lowering investors' confidence which leads to job losses. Insecurity often causes displacement of the population, which leads to poverty as citizens struggle to access basic necessities to survive, like food and water. Example is the ongoing conflict

between Russia and Ukraine (The 7 Most Common Causes of Poverty, 2023).

2. Social Injustice: When specific groups of people are discriminated based on their race, nationality, caste, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. This discrimination prevents these individuals from improving their situation in different ways, such as difficulty getting a good education, decreased job opportunities, and limited access to other resources that could help them improve entrepreneurship programs and break the cycle of poverty.

3. Climate Change: There are cases of climate change cause by severe storms, floods, and droughts, which affects entrepreneurship in developed countries. Agricultural communities are particularly vulnerable because they lose both their source of income and their food supply. Severe weather conditions have the ability to undermine successful economies as well as ravage struggling areas even further (The 7 Most Common Causes of Poverty, 2023).

4. Multiple taxations: In a bid to increase tax revenue and cushion the effects of Covid-19, governments in developed countries tend to have multiple taxes. An entrepreneur is now required to pay some federal tax for their business, pay VAT for the goods they produce, pay state-based taxes, renew their operating licenses each year, and numerous other tax-related obligations. These affect entrepreneurs in various ways.

7. METHODOLOGY

The paper employed the narrative – textual case study (NTCS) method. NTCS is a social science research method that employs intensively the information, data and academic materials made available and easily accessible by information and communication technology facilities such as internet, World Wide Web, online databases, e-libraries et cetera. The choice of this method is informed by the fact that NTCS combines the use of quantitative and qualitative observation, text content analysis and available official statistics in different proportions for problem-solving or problem-identification depending on the objective of the research (Abouzeedan and Leijon, 2007).

8. FINDINGS

Findings indicated that entrepreneurship have significant effects on poverty eradication. This is

because entrepreneurship development is a key tool for poverty reduction, stimulation of employment and economic growth in the state.

Motivation and skills are important drivers of the entrepreneurial behaviour and the entrepreneur needs certain skills to sustain. This is why government of Akwa Ibom State started the entrepreneurial empowerment with training of entrepreneurs. The training in entrepreneurship and provision of other facilities gives poor owners of micro and small enterprises opportunities to grow their businesses and get themselves and others out of poverty. The level of innovation and orientation given to the entrepreneurs help them develop the necessary skills needed to boost their businesses.

Entrepreneurial policies and activities, to an extent, have significant implications on poverty eradication. It provides economic independence, reduces poverty in some local communities, improve standard of living, increases per capita income, create of new jobs, fosters innovation, and drives market competition, which ultimately benefits citizens.

Most times funding for entrepreneurship are provided but due to government's nonchalant attitude, some of the funds are either diverted or not released on time or even when released, the corrupt officials will demand for certain percentage. This is in line with the views of Kara and Potter (2008) that corrupt officials always demand certain percentage which sometimes result to insufficient funds for the implementation of the programme. Government capitals for entrepreneurial programmes are not enough. This places limitation on entrepreneurship development in the state. Excessive processes with high interest rate in banks for credit facilities also made most entrepreneurs to avoid loans from the bank.

Uniform problems such as nepotism, lack of follow-up in government entrepreneurial services, insufficient funding and lack of basic infrastructural facilities as supported by the views of Ekong (2017) and Odeh (2016), continue to hinder the implementation of entrepreneurial programmes in the state. These are observed in programmes such as WAEDep, MEGP and AK-CARES.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Poverty goes beyond lack of resources. It extends to malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to safe drinking water, education, health care, social inequality, insecurity, lack of opportunity for personal growth and self-realization. These problems can only be remedied through the development of entrepreneurship skills among the citizens. Through this way, the issue of self – employment and job creation will increase, the menace of unemployment which have been the cause of poverty will reduce, economic growth ensured and poverty reduced to the barest minimum.

The number of those living in poverty continued to increase despite many entrepreneurial programmes for poverty reduction implemented in the state. Entrepreneurship development is a key tool for poverty reduction, stimulating employment and economic growth in the state. It boosts economic growth, enhances educational attainment and increases the rate of economic growth and for the state to move out of the disturbing high level of poverty, adequate attention must be given to the growth of entrepreneurship.

This paper therefore recommends that:

- a. Government should assist the entrepreneurs financially through provision of quick credit facilities and through regular workshops and seminars where experts in different fields will be commissioned to train the young entrepreneurs on the latest technique in entrepreneurship.
- b. New and existing entrepreneurs should be regularly trained with provision of adequate facilities to grow their businesses and get themselves and others out of poverty. Entrepreneurship development should be inculcated into school's curriculum at all levels of education to promote human empowerment and development.
- c. Measures should be put in place to ensure that start-up capitals and grants provided by the government to entrepreneurs are released on time and freed from corrupt officials. Government should partner with banks to grant credit facilities to entrepreneurs with low interest rates.

d. Government should set up an institution to ensure that the uniform problems such as nepotism, lack of follow-up in government entrepreneurial services, insufficient funding and lack of basic infrastructural facilities are eradicated.

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