

THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT: RE-THINKING STRATEGIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

No Nation can truly be said to be developed without a commensurate development of its human capital. Nigeria is known to be one of the most populous nations in the world with abundant but dormant human and material capabilities. The acquisition of total education by the citizens of a country has been identified as the most veritable and comprehensive tool for the development of her human capital. In Nigeria, the development of the educational sector has suffered several challenges and setbacks since the post-colonial days. This paper seeks to trace the challenges which have confronted the development of this most vital sector in the economy. It will also attempt to highlight the prospects and opportunities of developing human capital in Nigeria with a view to re-creating strategies to ensure a sustainable future for the country.

Keywords: National Development, Human Resources, Human Capital Development, Educational Development, sustainable future.

INTRODUCTION

The Objectives and Rationale of Human Capital Development in Nigeria

Human beings need training and development in order to be more effective and more productive in their lives. Sustainable development of any country depends purely and simply on how well the country's human capitals are developed. Harbison (1962:63) and Mbat (1992:73) concede this position. According to Harbison, the developmental potential of any nation depends primarily on its available human and capital resources and very marginal on her natural resources. He, therefore, concludes that a nation's population makes up her very inestimable asset. He further asserts that the human resource situation in Nigeria is essentially characterized by the co-existence of a shortage of skilled, high level man power with a large pool of unskilled labour. Mbat on his own part opines that human resource development provides the cardinal point at which any realistic economic development can be based. He noted that without

development either through training or education or both for better skills, national economic development cannot make the desired impact, since according to Chikwelu, (2005, p.5), development should be "humano-centric."

The abundance of these unskilled and 'largely untrained Nigerians continued to pose serious problems to every of Nigeria's developmental enterprise even to the extent that those mass of unskilled labour has constituted a surplus of under-utilized human capital, Harbison and Myers, (1964:58). Against this backdrop, Adebayo (2001:129) concludes that we have failed in our educational training and human capital development programmes. On his own part, the then Director-General of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Prof. Longmas S. Wapmunk noted that human capital training and education are as important as financial, material and technological factors in the growth of the nation. He stressed that for a developing economy like Nigeria, the need for human capital is even more acute since it

is human beings who have to proffer solutions to such problems, they need skills and knowledge to perform and to achieve results that can change positively.

Nwobo (2009, p.69), in his study on human capital development, concluded that transforming the current human capital development and the institutional capacity of the people to meet the technological development challenges of the 21st century is the biggest task facing the Nigeria nation. Nwobo avers that three critical questions must pre-occupy the minds of any political office holder at any point in time, mostly, at this critical time in the life of the nation; how has the Nigerian educational sector fared in discharging its obligation to the people since establishment? Why do we still have many out of school children, so many unemployed youths and half-baked graduates? What can be done to redeem the battered image of the Nigerian educational system? Nwobo argued that human capital development in the country concerns itself more with instituting changes in the employee's attitude and behaviour as well as general career enhancement. It is indeed a learning activity that concerns itself with the ' future needs of the entire nation. Appleby (1984, p. 76) in a similar study concluded that human capital development in the nation is a sine-qua-non for effective organizational delivery in every other sector.

National capacity assessment report of Federal Republic of Nigeria(p:128) in discussing human capital development discloses that the national policy on human capital was established in the country in 1991 with the main goal of creating national wealth through high performance and utilization of the country's human capital for achieving rapid, balanced, sustainable economic and social development.

Considering the critical areas that require human capital development and training Onyishi, (2002:126) in his study maintained that proper education brings about training and development of personnel for every organization and that it has the cardinal goal of creating skills, attitudes and desirable behavioural change which has to be in line with organizational needs. He noted that knowledge and skills are designed and imparted to the relevant employees in whatever job or profession they choose in life.

The entire process of human capital development, according to Bedeian, (1987:66) embraces the development and training of an individual's skills, knowledge and abilities so as to improve present and future performance.

On the rationale for human capital development in the life of any nation, Ndiomu (1992:58) stresses that human capital of any nation constitutes the ultimate dignity of that nation. What actually constitutes development processes in its true sense is nothing but the interaction of people with the natural resources. He went further to point out that people are the human capital for the supply of the physical labour, technical and professional skills which are germane for effective and efficient planning and implementation of development policies, programmes, projects and other daily activities.

Ndiomu, (1992, p. 67), further stresses that "what should be seen as a human capital development is nothing but the training of people to develop their capacities on their respective duties. He developed a close linkage between educational training and development, stressing that the main idea

between the terms remain essentially the same.

It is indeed an obvious statement that human capital development is critical to the attainment of any nation's developmental goals.

As Udo-Aka (1992:71) maintains, the institutional concern of any human capital development enterprise shall be to rouse the intellectual knowledge of the population through an improved quality of education at all levels as well as provide skills needed to meet the country's human resource needs. The impact of training, according to Avasthi and Maheshwari is "to provide for an increased competence of the individual by imparting professional knowledge, broader vision and correct patterns of behaviour, habits and attitudes. They added that education and training should be a continuous process in response to continuously felt need" (Laxnikanth, 2006:315). Yoder (1967:23) believes that developed crops of intellectuals are necessary for managing and operating a nations' productive and service enterprises as well as the economy.

In view of the importance and the pivotal role which education plays in human capital development of any nation, it is necessary at this point to take a cursory look at how the development of education started in Nigeria right from the pre-independence years.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA- THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE YEARS

Available literature has it that up to 1914, western education system in Nigeria had no definite philosophy. The British government had not taken any decision regarding the definite shape of education in its colonies. The education ordinances that were put up by the colonial masters only ridiculously

complicated the system without reflecting the conditions and aspirations of the Nigerian people for future development.

Here, an attempt will be made at getting us acquainted with the efforts made at developing a philosophy of education based on the aspirations of Nigerians. Discussions on the educational development that took place in Nigeria from the pre-colonial days and beyond will be made with a view to consolidating our knowledge of the trends of educational development in Nigeria over the years. The impacts of these developments will similarly be highlighted so that we learn how to further the course of education in this country.

The two commissions that were set up in the post-independence era discovered that the colonial masters were running an educational system that was classically book based. They accused the missionaries of following the ideals prevailing in their home countries which might not work functionally in Africa. The reports further condemned the subjects being taught to Africans as direct copies of the subject contents from British and American schools with little attempt to use local materials in the teaching of the subjects like history and geography.

The two commissions however recommended that:

1. Education should be developed along the vocational and cultural lives of the people.
2. The needs of African societies should be met through education so as to promote development.
3. Educational and religious responsibilities of government should be effectively organized and supervised.

These criticisms and recommendations undoubtedly laid the foundation for the evolution of the colonial educational policies in Africa which influenced the British government to assess its responsibilities on education to its colonies. In 1923 therefore, it decided to approve the establishment of an advisory committee on native education in tropical areas to advise the secretary of state for the colonies on matters of native education and to assist him in advancing the progress of education in the British tropical Africa (Adesina, 1990:132).

The committee worked tirelessly and produced a thirteen point memorandum which provided, for the first time, a sound basis for Nigeria's educational policies. They are as follows:

1. Government should cooperate with educational policy makers and educational agencies. Each territory should have an education advisory board on which all educational interests should be represented.
2. Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitude, occupations and tradition of the various people, conserving as far as possible, all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life, adapting them where necessary to changes, circumstances and progressive ideas as an agent of natural growth and evolution.
3. Government should be concerned with religious and character training.
4. Education service must be made to attract the best men from Britain, whether for permanent career or for short service appointment.
5. Grants should be given to aid voluntary schools which satisfy the requirements.
6. African languages as well as English should be used in education.
7. African teaching staff must be adequate in number, in qualification and in character and should include women.
8. The system of specifically trained visiting teachers is commended as a means of improving village schools.
9. A system of inspection and supervision of schools is essential.
10. Technical industrial training should be best given in a system of apprenticeship government workshops. Instructions in village craft must be clearly different from the training of skilled mechanic.
11. Vocational, other than industrial training, should be carried out through a serious learning in government departments.
12. The education of girls and women is of vital importance, though with problems. Educated mothers mean educated homes. Health education is important. Therefore there must be trained women teachers. Education must provide women as well as schools for girls.
13. A complete education, including infant, secondary education of different technical and vocational schools and institutions, some of which may hereafter reach university rank, for such subjects as teacher education, medicine, agriculture and education. The education of the whole community should be advanced (Adesina, 1990. 64).

The ordinance of 1926, the colonial development act of 1929 and the 1948 educational ordinance merely re-echoed the provisions of the Phelps-Stokes recommendations on the decentralization of education and got the government to be more involved in the control and supervision

of education. Curriculum content became more expanded to involve the training of indigenous teachers which was pursued more vigorously. Between 1945 and 1970, Nigeria began to develop its higher education system. The committee's reports set to examine the possibility of developing the sector were studied by government with a view to implementing the recommendations right away. In line with this therefore, the government studied the Elliot commission report which was established in 1943 to examine the possibility of establishing university colleges in Nigeria, the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sierra Leone.

The report suggested the establishment of the university college, Ibadan which came into being in 1947.

In 1959, the government appointed another commission headed by Ere Ashby "to confirm investigation into the Nigeria's need in the field of secondary school certificate of higher education over the next twenty years" (Fafunwa, 1974:15).

This was the first time in Nigeria's history that "Nigerians represented by the minister of education, decided to examine the higher educational structure in terms of the needs of the country (Ibid).

This afforded the Nigerian educationists the opportunity to work, for the first time, together with counterparts from Britain and America to fashion out the best practicable suggestions of the field of education. It was also the first time that a comprehensive review of education in Nigeria was undertaken by experts.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY, VOCATIONAL, TEACHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA-THE POST-INDEPENDENT YEARS

The Development of Primary Education in Nigeria

The development of primary education after independence was based on the Ashby recommendations. The government of Northern region felt that the greatest need was to accelerate the expansion of primary schools. Its aim was to attain the Ashby report target of 25% of children of school age to be in school by 1970. The government also designed a programme that was to advance the region into universal primary education as soon as possible. At the same time, infrastructure was to be laid in terms of post-primary facilities in order to ensure a balanced education development.

The Eastern and Western regions were already controlling high proportion of primary schools population through their universal primary education programmes. However, problems were becoming enormous because of the poor quality staff and the falling standards amidst high cost of education. The Eastern region had to scrap its own UPE and directed its attention to teacher's training with a view to achieving high quality work in the schools. In the West, the successful implementation of UPE since 1955 left them with the time to concentrate on raising the standard of teaching in schools.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The post-independence development of secondary education centered on the following problem areas:

1. The expansion in primary education created a high demand for secondary education.
2. The Ashby commission had called for increase in the number of secondary school population and a revision of its curriculum.

3. Some commissions appointed to review the educational system found that the content of the secondary school education, as well as the method of instruction in schools, were inappropriate.
4. Other problems identified included the over emphasis on book education in secondary schools, pupils despised manual work, Science curriculum was poor, these contributed to the so-called falling standards in education.

However, to meet the increasing number of secondary school students, government opened many new secondary schools. Generally, the curriculum was English Language, Mathematics, History, Geography, Religious knowledge, local language, Fine and Applied arts, General science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. French was introduced gradually to replace Latin and Greek. The grammar school kept its lead and remains the darling of both parent and students. The higher school, i.e. sixth form, was not successful except in a few government well established schools, with well trained graduate teachers and enough laboratory equipment. This was because the curriculum was tailored to meet the requirement of foreign examinations. Available resources in the schools could not meet these.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

After independent, the government of the Northern region established twelve craft centers and three technical schools all over the region. A technical institution in Kaduna admitted students from all parts of the north. By 1960, the Eastern Region had thirty three technical and vocational institutions of various kinds. A college of technology, now the Institute of Management and

Technology was established in Enugu. In the Western Region, government established four trade centers and women occupational centre at Abeokuta. A technical institute now the Auchu polytechnic was established at Auchu. In Lagos, we had Yaba College of technology and Yaba Trade School at Surulere.

It is important to observe that a number of bigger institution firms like the United Arab Company (UAC), department of corporations like the Public Works Department (PWD) or Ministry of Works, Post and Telegraph (P&T), the Nigerian railways were also established to absorb the products of these early technical and vocational schools.

Coal Corporation had technical schools in which they trained artisans for their specific industries. Last but not the least are the roadside mechanics who acquire their skill for the self-employed artisans while many girls acquire their skills in needle work, sewing, catering and domestic science from such roadside artisan as well.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

After independence, teacher education had two major problems - low output of the teachers and the poor quality of the teachers produced. To meet the requirement, government granted the provision of additional grade II training colleges and extra stream to the existing ones. To make up for the poor quality, government approved the upgrading of most of Grades III Training Colleges to grade II. Then the new Grade II teachers colleges were to be established. Unfortunately the Ashby recommendation for the establishment of teachers grade I colleges was not vigorously pursued. However, the Western Government introduced the Ohio project, a normal

science training, admitting teachers with grade II teacher's certificate. Lagos had government teachers training at Surulere. The Eastern region established a science centre at Umudike, near Umuahia for the production of teachers grade I certificates.

Soon the teachers grade I programme gave way to the Nigerian certificate in education (NCE) for the preparation of teachers for the lower forms of secondary school and for the teachers training colleges. They were three year programme institutions. The advanced teachers colleges, as they were initially called, were established in Lagos in 1962, Ibadan 1962 (but in 1964 it became Adeyemi College of Education Ondo), Zaria in 1964 (but moved to Kano in 1964) and Owerri in 1963. In 1968, one was established at Abraka, Bendel State but took name of College of Education.

When the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established, it took the lead in starting a new Teacher's Programme known as B.A., B.Sc. and B.Ed in Education. This meant that a student could combine education courses with one or two teaching subject and offer them throughout the student's four years to graduate. This replaced the traditional system of making a degree before coming for a one year diploma in education.

THE IMPACT OF THE FIRST GENERATION HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY

By 1960, the University College Ibadan had established itself as a reputable institution of higher learning. It was also making a great contribution to the man-power need of Nigeria. But the need of larger output university graduate was increasingly felt and commonly expressed. For example, as far back as 1955, there was serious thoughts and attempts to establish another

University. Ibadan was criticized for its low annual intake said to be conditioned by residential nature. Partly because of these criticisms, the Federal Minister for Education, on behalf of Federal and Regional Governments, was appointed by the Ashby commission. The commission's recommendation gave support to the establishment of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife, Ile-Ife and University of Lagos. It was after 1970 that state governments joined in the establishment of Universities while the Federal government started to establish universities. These early Universities provided the first set of indigenous graduates that are now in charge of the political and economic life of the country.

SOME CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The threat facing the development of Education and Human Capital Development in Nigeria is multifarious in nature. Educationists over the years have lamented that the current national policy on education was conceived and hatched at a time when the country's economy was buoyant. But its implementation started at a time of tight economic situation. This, according to them, was a major factor hindering the realization of the objectives outlined in the policy document. It was equally true that there was an increase in population and expansion of facilities at all levels of education in the country. The facilities became over stretched and more are required to make the desired impact. It is equally true that management and maintenance of institutional facilities are capital intensive, which the government alone cannot bear now; there is need therefore to mobilize the various segments

of the society to complement the efforts of the government towards realizing the goals set in the national policy on education.

A number of scholars have recognized enormous problems associated with human capital development programmes. Ubeku (1975), Ogunleye (2005) and Okonkwo (2007), admit that for proper handling of human capital development, the integrated approach to educational and manpower policy, which would involve periodic review of curriculum content training and retraining, should be the most ideal. (Ubeku, 1975), stressed that investing on educational training and development are wise investment which any nation must embark on; but notwithstanding, the Nigerian nation and her government appear to regard educational development programmes as expensive ventures which yield little return.

Okonkwo (2007) argues that human capital development programmes help to raise the skill and standard of individuals while developing potentials of the entire future work force of the country. Stressing further on major constraint to human capital development policies in Nigeria nation, Ogunyele also posited that most of these problems are human capital management issues, others, administrative, while few of them are operational issues, which if given a good caliber man-power deposition and finance, can be drastically resolved. In other words, the problems bedeviling the Nigerian education system can be addressed by any political leader that is equipped with qualitative education, will power, experience and intelligence or a committed manager of men and material resources.

Undoubtedly, educational training is not mere transmission of knowledge and skills; rather, it is regarded as the acquisition of the

art of utilizing knowledge and skill. It is therefore a sheer waste of time and effort, according to Barrachogh (1973:3), to transmit knowledge and skills without the art of imparting them. In fact, effective education, according to Ofuebe, is not cramming information into the heads of pupils and students. It is instead, a two way process of interaction between the learner and teachers by which the learner becomes fitted to the act. Goel quoted by Laxmikanth (2006:315) share the same view. He defines educational training as an action process by which capabilities of the learner can be improved to meet the future needs of the country in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes required in performing personal and organizational tasks and functions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing discussions and analysis, it will be pertinent to summarize at this point that no nation can boast of a stable and sustainable future without a well-developed human resources. Efforts to develop human resources or human capital in Nigeria started as far back as the colonial days. That was when the British colonial administration established schools with vocational and technical centers to train low level indigenous technicians and artisans which were required to meet their imperial and exploitative objectives in the colonies. Successive governments in Nigeria since the dawn of the post-independence era have made several attempts to re-position educational development at all levels in the country to meet national human capital development goals. Many of these attempts, which are encapsulated in the National policy on Education, have been successful while others have been met with stiff challenges and inconsistencies in

implementation of educational programmes and projects

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made in order to surmount the challenges of Educational development and the growing requirements of human capital development in the country.

1. The National Policy on education should be constantly reviewed and updated to reflect contemporary best practices in Educational Development across the world in line with the human resources requirements in the Nigerian economy.
2. Access to free and quality education in the country should be made easy and unhindered.
3. Education should be developed along technical and vocational lines to meet the expanding technological needs of the nation and also to produce graduates that will be self reliant and less dependent on non-existing white collar jobs.
4. There is need for a general and periodic review of the curriculum's content in all schools to be in line with current trends across the globe.
5. A uniform academic calendar across the country should be adopted at all levels of education to facilitate a system of simultaneous monitoring of all schools both public and private to ensure standards and quality assurance.
6. There is every need to establish a mechanism for post school performance evaluation of pupils, students and graduates to determine if they actually acquired the requisite training and personal development which they were meant to get on

their various schools.

It is believed that the prospects and fortunes of our education and human capital development will be positively enhanced if the above recommended strategies are adopted by the authorities concerned.

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