

EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the role of education in sustainable national development. It starts with a review of national development so far. It examines the concept of education and sustainability of national development. Through the medium of analysis, the paper discovers that the Nigerian economy is fraught with a lot of challenges which include: Inequality in terms of income and opportunities, inequality in access to quality of services in health care, education and water. These factors are responsible for high poverty rate, unemployment and low standard of living. Based on the findings, the paper highlights the critical roles which education can play in revamping the ailing economy by injecting the right caliber of human and material resources. The paper concludes that the government should ensure adequate funding of all educational programmes and other development areas such as agriculture and health to enhance sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainable, National Development, Education, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Report (2017), Nigeria has an estimated population of 190 million, population density of 211 per km² and accounts for 47% of West Africa's population and has one of the largest populations of youth in the world. Unfortunately, Nigeria has remained a mono-cultural economy, with its dependence on the exportation of crude oil as its main source of foreign exchange earnings over a long period of time. Riti et al (2016), noted that the revenue from oil have been inefficiently managed to stimulate the desired growth levels and the required sustainable economic and national development. Consequently, Nigeria still lags behind in the index of many less developed nations with far less potentials. Poverty, unemployment and low productivity have characterized Nigerian economy. A number of policies and programmes have been put in place by successive governments to restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy with a view to addressing poverty, unemployment and low levels of production. Nigeria today faces two serious choices even as the 21st century rolls to an end: the choice to seek admission into the global community of Great nations or to maintain its present status and slide into a historic archive of a poor despondent nation of Third world category (Adimmadu, 2006). This paper therefore, seeks to proffer possible ways of using education to achieve sustainable national development.

The Concept of Education in Brief

Okere and Amaele (2016) see education as an act, a process and a product. As an act, education involves various activities which aim at producing the acceptable man. As a process, it is guided by procedures that aim at producing capable human beings. As a product, educational activities and processes result in the production of acceptable, self-reliant, dependable, effective and efficient citizen(s).

The Concept of National Development

National development can be regarded as growth in human and material resources of a nation. It also means absolute structural transformation of the socio-economic, political, cultural, scientific and educational set up of a nation. It can equally be regarded as the process involving the reduction or eradication of inequality, absolute poverty, unemployment, as well as institutional changes and economic growth. From the above analysis, development spans the various dimensions of the nation's life. Development is evident in technological, economic, political and social aspects of the nation's life. Mkpa (1999) is of the opinion that technological development is the ability of a nation to demonstrate evidence of technological self-reliance while development in the economic sector implies a substantial increase in the per-capita income of a nation and the ability of a nation to produce much of its essential goods and services. On the other hand, social development comprises the quality of educational opportunities, literacy rate, infant and maternal mortality rate. It also includes the ability to manage change, plan, and monitor changes in the indicators enumerated above. Political development deals with the degree of political participation and awareness among the citizens, the quality of democratic principles, people's freedom the degree to which the government is accountable to the people, the quality of leadership; and the quality of the rule of law that prevails in the state.

The concept of sustainability

Sustainability is often complex and has multi-faceted perspectives. Following the search for global solution for development and environmental problems occasioned by the increasing conflict between the industrialized North and the developing south. Sustainable development is a socio-economic concept whose content varies according to the culture, time and perspective. It can only be properly understood by adopting the integrative approach involving ecological, social, political and economic considerations. Sustainable development is also a conglomerate of the four sectors (ecological, political, social and economic as overall social development is only sustainable if no deterioration occurs in the medium and long term in the sectors referred to above.

Nwoke in Nwosu (2017) opines that sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depends.

Nigeria's National Development Portrait

A cursory look at Nigeria's national development profile will reveal the following:

1. The pace of Nigeria's national development, is too slow, most of the time, static and invariably present Nigeria as a nation wallowing in developmental fantasies

2. Our national development plans, efforts appear to be cosmetic, paid lip services to, largely unattainable due to implementation bottlenecks and problems
3. National development emphasis in Nigeria is largely lopsided in favour of the urban areas to the near total realistic development of the ruralties
4. Our preponderant attitudinal and behavioural disposition in all spheres of life which are largely negative and manifest in ethnic prejudices, mistrust, corruption, intolerance, cult of mediocrity are inimical to worthy striving for national development
5. Development is a product of scientific and technological consciousness. Perhaps, our developmental problems are as a result of Nigeria's low level of scientific and technological consciousness and their attainment. (Mezieobi, 1998)

From the above, Nigeria 's socio-economic and political problems range from Agriculture,

Technology, political instability, physical and human resources development, capacity underutilization and lots more. That means that the Nigerian economic history is characterized by failures, crisis and retardation. In the political scene, political leadership is still bedeviled by regional and tribal considerations, extreme poverty, fiscal distress among citizens, rapidly decaying infrastructure and the reliance on mono cultural economy as a basis for economic growth.

Goals of Education in Nigeria

Education is an instrument “par excellence for effecting national development”. (FRN, 2013). It empowers and equips individuals with the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding needed to live a productive life that promotes national growth and development. The goals of education are as follows:

- (i) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity,
- (ii) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- (iii) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
- (iv) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

These objectives translate to national philosophy and hold promise for education in the area of launching sustained attack on the forces that negate true national cohesion and development. Efforts should be made to detribalize Nigerian people by encouraging inter-tribal marriages and adoption of a common language. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes should include good work ethic and attitudinal changes that emphasize hard work and perseverance as against materialism and selfish ambition.

Roles of Education in National Development

Nwosu (2012) avers that: The crucial roles which education can play in national development have been reiterated by the national policy on Education as follows:

- a. Contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;
- b. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society;

- c. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appropriate the local and external environments;
- d. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable the individuals to be self-reliant member of the society;
- e. Forge and cement national unity.

The education sector is well positioned to address the challenges of national development. Biobaku in Nwosu (2017) has argued that the university is not only a catalyst for changes but also a veritable agent or instrument for change, germane for freeing the nation from the shackles of foreign dependency and fulfilling the needs of a renascent and plural society like Nigeria. This observation is supported by the Report on vision 2020 (2009:5) which maintains thus: “Education is one of the most important factors in Nigeria's quest to become one of the largest economies by the year 2020. The development of Nigeria's human capital is the most important and the strongest weapon against poverty”. There is critical need for relevant manpower planning in the area of science and technology, agriculturist, engineers, medical practitioners and a host of others. These calibers of manpower are needed to bring the desired innovations and ingenuity to turn the Nigerian economy around.

Olson in Nwosu (2013) has remarked that “technology is the many-faceted phenomenon in materials created and advanced by man to free himself from the enslavement by nature”. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), has recognized the aim of technical education as the acquisition of salable skills and competencies which are of practical use in the society. Akintola in Nwosu (2013) corroborates the above idea when he defines technical education as “that education which utilizes scientific knowledge in the acquisition of practical and applied skills in the solution of technical problems”.

Section 7 (40) of the 2013 edition of the national policy on education refers technical and vocational education to that aspect of the education process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. The policy document went further to state that technical and vocational education embodies:

- (i) An integral part of general education,
- (ii) A means of preparing for occupational skills and for effective participation in the world of work;
- (iii) An aspect of life- long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- (iv) An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development.

The policy document envisions that the goals of technical and vocational education in Nigeria are to:

- (a) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels;
- (b) Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- (c) Give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically. (NPE, 2013:23).

Innovations in technology must be adapted to suit the peculiarities and the changing circumstances of the national economy. Education helps the people to order their priorities and decide between alternative lines of action. Sequel to the above, the polytechnic education is designed to emancipate the citizens of Nigeria from technological backwardness. Ita (2017) posits that the present information age and the associated globalization effect have re-oriented the faculties of progressive-minded educationist to expand the frontier of higher education beyond the restricted area of teaching, research, and postulation of theories to a more utilitarian and functional demands for technology development, transfer and application, human and institutional capacity building, entrepreneurship, citizen empowerment and the drive for social change and sustainable education programme. Investment in education could take a wide variety of forms such as expansion of education facilities, vocational education, non-formal and adult education. Massive educational expansion would eliminate education disparity between different individuals, male and female, poor and rich, as well as rural and urban. That underscores the role of functional and entrepreneurship education in reducing unemployment and breaking the vicious circle of poverty.

Functional education is a selective literacy education that is tailored to a particular need. Functional literacy develops individuals in the skills of reading, writing, and calculating for his or her own community's development. Merem in Anyanwu and Okere (2015) avers that functional literacy is a process of learning to read, write and calculate which supposedly provides the adult learner with an opportunity to acquire such information as well as hopefully make him a better and more effective Participant in the economic, social, political and cultural activities of his society.

Entrepreneurship education is an indispensable factor in Nigeria's quest for sustainable development. Entrepreneurship comprises experiences that equip the individual (learner or out of school youths) with the ability and vision of how to study and change different types of opportunities. Individuals acquire creative ideas, face risks and take responsibilities. In a nutshell, entrepreneurship education performs the following roles:

- i. Creates employment,
- ii. Increases national income;
- iii. Develops small and medium scale industrial skills;
- iv. Enhances agricultural development;
- v. Empowers the disadvantaged group in the society.

In consonance with the foregoing, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report in Nwosu (2017) avers thus: The process of development should at least create a conducive environment for people individually and collectively to develop their full potential and have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interests.

Todaro in Nwosu (2017) specifies such development as follows:

- Increase in availability and widened distribution of basic life-sustaining provision such as food, shelter, health facilities and security apparatuses
- Increase in the levels of living in addition to higher income, provision of more jobs, better education and greater attention to cultural and humanistic views,

- Expansion in the range of economic and social changes to individual and group, evidenced by increased freedom from servitude and dependence on other peoples and nation states and freedom from forces of ignorance and human misery.

Nigeria's national development objectives hinge on two principal goals: a just and egalitarian society, and a united, strong and self-reliant nation. To achieve a self-reliant and egalitarian society, the rural areas must be provided with opportunities to earn income and there should be massive investment in technical and infrastructural aid to the rural communities. Education helps in bringing the needed changes to the rural community. The rural areas need education that is relevant to their needs, interests and aspirations. Wants in Maduka (2012), stresses that educated farmers are more innovative, have higher incomes and are more knowledgeable than illiterate farmers. This would help to promote agricultural advancement since education of the rural farmers is necessary for improving their decision making, efficiency and productivity. Benefits of technological innovations in the area of extension services should be extended to the rural areas. The rural areas should be given a fair share in our national development strategy. Majority of Nigerians live in the rural areas, and the rural communities provide most of the food consumed by urban dwellers. Much of the country's agricultural needs for raw materials, industrial and economic growth come from rural areas.

PROBLEMS OF NIGRIAN EDUCATION IN RELATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our educational sector has failed to give the much needed impetus to national development due to the following factors:

1. Inequality in terms of income and opportunities,
2. Inequality in access to quality of services in health care, education, water and so on;
3. Growing unemployment and high levels of poverty;
4. Corruption, ineptitude and policy somersaults;
5. Financial constraints;
6. Lack of solid primary and secondary school science background;
7. Poor funding of science and technological institutions;
8. Defective educational system;
9. Fiscal Retrenchment.

In Nigeria, there is yawning gap between the rich and the poor in terms of income, wealth and other resources. This has often resulted to unequal accessibility to social and economic amenities such as food, shelter, housing, health, water etc. The worst case scenario is the alarming rate of unemployment and general poverty. A good national science and technology programme should have a solid foundation at the primary school level. It will also be reinforced at the secondary and consolidated at the tertiary level. Unfortunately, the Nigerian situation presents a sharp contrast. Not much science teaching and learning can be noticed among our primary schools. Secondary schools are not better placed to lay solid foundations for science and technology education because, in some parts of Nigeria, science laboratories are either non-existent or at best, poorly equipped. Science and technological institutions are poorly funded, thus, resulting in poor quality output of these institutions. There are misplaced priorities in favour of less essential aspects of the nation's life.

The formal education system that was introduced by the colonial administrators was oriented towards literary studies. Nigerians were prepared for white collar jobs. The 6-3-3-4 educational system that was introduced in the 1980s has not really achieved its goal of inculcating the spirit of self reliance through functional and technological education. Government response to financial crisis has often led to cuts in public expenditure which on the long run negatively affect household disposable income, and in the process progressively alter the existing economic equilibrium. The result is aggravation of poverty, income redistribution problem, chaos and violence.

The Way Forward

Education is critical to the goal of national development. The policies and programmes of our educational institutions must reflect the desired national goals. Therefore, academic programmes must be restructured to provide the academic and skill related demands of the new age. Educational institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of education and universities are indispensable in national development. They should be adequately funded and equipped to cope with the challenges of national development. There should also be collaboration and linkages between these institutions to enable them harness and pull their intellectual and infrastructural resources together for national growth and development.

Teaching and learning of science especially at the primary and secondary schools levels should be stimulated. Young Nigerians should be encouraged to pursue science courses in their studies. Science teachers should also be attracted into our institutions of learning and should be encouraged to improve on their professional competence. The national policy on science and technology should be pursued at all levels. Government should sustain policies aimed at ameliorating poverty and hardship especially in the rural areas. Agricultural extension workers and rural industrialization should be pursued. This will in no small measure, help to reduce rural poverty and redistribute income among the Nigerian populace.

Conclusion

In view of the challenges to sustainable national development, efforts should be geared towards bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. This can be done through a wide range of income redistribution and the provision of opportunities that benefit the poor more than the rich. A greater percentage of the Nigerian populace lives in the rural areas and therefore, need more income earning opportunities such as agricultural development and rural industrialization. There is also need for widespread improvement in health, nutrition, housing, education, water supply and so on.

Education is critical to sustainable national development. Educational process not just in schools, but in all other sectors of education including higher education, adult and continuing functional education, literacy and entrepreneurship education should be encouraged. There is, therefore, the general need to improve the curricular of studies including analyses of the contents of all subjects. The government should ensure adequate funding of all educational programmes and other development areas such as agriculture and health to enhance

sustainable national development in Nigeria.

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