

HUMAN CAPITAL ACCUMULATION IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Since the World Education forum in Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000), there has been a global resurgence in the recognition of the indispensable role education plays in economic and social development. Nigeria is no exception to this global phenomenon and the government has embraced education for all by 2015 as an integral part of its poverty reduction strategy (National Planning Commission, 2004). The commitment to have all citizens educated by that date is also enshrined in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. But with a population of over 150 million people and growth of that population to the tune of about of 3 per cent annually during the past decade, the output record of 5 per cent annually over the same period is not enviable. That record hosts valuable lessons for the country's future as it strives for rapid progress in its development efforts.

Admittedly, the economy of Nigeria has been undergoing profound changes whose components include greater openness to trade and investments, liberalisation of the domestic markets and increased participation of the private sector in the provision of goods and services. But alongside these positive changes are appreciable weaknesses that the economy exhibits as globalisation proceeds. These weaknesses, which have endured for long despite Nigeria's enormous resources, explain the country's under development.

An inquiry into the underlying causes of these weaknesses reveals that economic and social policies imposed by forces outside the country marginalize the local potential and stifle

the initiative and zeal of the people towards development, investments too are not adequately targeting poverty reduction, and so there is a growing lack of basic needs. Worse still, the structures sustaining Nigeria's underdevelopment frustrate economic and social transformation, thereby solidifying the foundation that regenerates despair in the country. The imperatives for change are, therefore, overwhelming particularly if we compare Nigeria with the countries of East and South East Asia that have leapfrogged development. No doubt, there is growth in the country, but Nigeria does not have a self-reliant growth. This has contributed to the subservience of the country to the dictates of big multinational capital controlled by the agents of International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IMF/World Bank), to the escalating debt crisis, to the mismatch between saving and investment and to relative loss of freedom on decisions bordering on sectors where more critical investments are to be made. The result has been the painful adjustment programmes that have not resolved the development disasters facing the country.

To eliminate poverty is the overriding objective of development policy, but for Nigeria that has remained a distant dream. The number of people living in poverty rose from 60 per cent in 1990 to 65 per cent in 2002 (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2003). Following present trends, more people would be added to the country's poor as time progresses. But then, hands cannot be folded if the country is to meet

the New Millennium Development Goals (NMDG) of the United Nations (United Nations, 2000). Consequently, rapid and broadly based growth is required in the economic context and inroads made into the more stubborn poverty areas like health, nutrition and education for the country to join the League of Nations enjoying robust standards of living.

Good quality education is of crucial importance to Nigeria's social and economic development. Indeed, the country cannot expect to successfully integrate and benefit from the globalization process without an articulate human resource base. That is why in this, paper, we focus on the relationship between education and development in Nigeria. Relying on the literature that has grown at the intersection of these two active areas of research, we specifically analyze what, is on ground and what, puzzles remain unresolved. We do not intend to offer a comprehensive answer to these puzzles. But we have attempted to show that without a steady growth in educational opportunities, the quest for Nigeria's economic break through would be a mirage.

The paper deals first with the introduction. The second section revisits the link between education and development. In the process, the literature that affirms a positive relationship between the two phenomena is reviewed. The third section assesses the extent to which Nigeria's education policy has aided or failed the country's development, while the final section highlights the findings and identifies the lessons that can be learnt.

11. The Link between Education and Development: A Revisitation

Mainstream classical economic theory postulates that output is determined by inputs (see, Richardo, 1908 and Smith, 1979). By implication, intensive output can be accomplished when more is produced from a given amount of inputs. The inputs normally are

the traditional factors of production, which include land, labour and capital. To prove this point, Richardo (1908) contends that the output of corn depends on the proportion in which these factors are combined.

With the value determination and distribution theories of Marx (1967), the classical economic doctrine was subjected to serious criticism. The attempt to resolve the classical/Marxian contradictions led neo-classical economists to formulate the idea of entrepreneurship, believing it would settle the problems associated with profit sharing (see, for example, Marshall, 1961 and Klenow and Rodriguez-Clare, 1997). Entrepreneurship is synonymous with innovation, which brings about a new production function that enables an economy to achieve a higher equilibrium level. Put differently, innovation helps the entrepreneurs to attain greater levels of productivity and that constitutes the essence of economic progress (Inegbenebor and Iredia, 1995).

Innovation is meaningless in the absence of knowledge. But knowledge cannot be adequately quantified and sold like other factors. Thus, it is more of a public good in contrast to other factors that are private goods. Since knowledge is a public good and is the sole input into the production of knowledge, the knowledge industry has zero costs and zero revenues (Arrow, 1999). Human beings constitute the storehouse of knowledge, which can be increased through human capital accumulation. As it were, knowledge refers to the abilities and skills of human - resources of a country, while human capital accumulation is the acquisition of knowledge and increases in the number of people who possess knowledge and skills required for economic growth and development (Chete and Adeoye, 2003).

From both theoretical and empirical studies, the conclusions are evident of a direct relationship between the stock of human capital

available to a country and the level of its development (Banhabib and Spiegel, 1994, Bils and Kleiio, 1996, Gemmell, 1996, NISER, 1997, Central Bank of Nigeria 2002 and Uwatt, 2003). This is because people with more education have the capacity to expand the parameters of production and as a result earn more wages. By extension, if greater numbers are educated, average income would rise, thereby encouraging savings needed for investments and growth (Pritchett 2001).

Education thus raises productivity and this explains the importance attached to educational activities worldwide. The revolution currently underway in developing countries in the context of having their peoples educated attests to this fact. Indeed, between 1960 and 2002, the average developing country gross primary enrollments rose from 66 per cent to 100 per cent, while gross secondary enrollments rose from 14 per cent to 40 per cent (Grote, et. al. 1999 and Dehejia and Gatti, 2002). This is encouraging although more needs to be done so that developing countries would be at par with developed nations where complete access of school age children to educational facilities has been achieved (OECD, 2000).

Even then, increases in educational enrollments are not identical with and do not guarantee growth in an economy. The explanation for this hinges on the constraints to the actualisation of ingenuity in people. First, human capital does not thrive in undemocratic environments or where entrepreneurial endeavours are not adequately rewarded. Second, human capital is inactive in conditions where mediocrity is applauded and intellectualism is feared and sidetracked. Finally, human capital could be poorly utilised when there is a mismatch between available skills and the openings in the labour market (World Bank, 2004b).

In addition, investments in education yield multiple results because such investments help to improve the health of the citizenry since

educated people take their health conditions seriously. Such investments also enhance living standards since they enable recipients to have access to better paid employment as well as emancipate them from mundane cultural practices and superstitions. Moreover, education facilitates the active participation of recipients in the social and political affairs of their communities and countries. Simply put, education raises the quality of life through its impact on poverty reduction (Adamu, 2003).

Human capital is primarily accumulated through education and training insofar as these two variables are the most important means of upgrading the human intellect and skills. Education and training can achieve these objectives because they represent a commodity and a process. As a commodity, they are a stock or level of knowledge that is acquired through learning and experience by an individual or groups. As a process, they are a continuum by which knowledge, including the moral, cultural and so on values associated with it is transmitted to individuals and groups as well as the manner by which such values are harnessed to promote and advance societal growth and development (Yesufu, 2000).

Investment in human capital is also an influential conduit for equitable income distribution. Income disparity is higher where a society is divided into a literate few and an illiterate majority as is evident from the experience of most African countries. As the rate of illiteracy decreases, the number of people in paid employment normally increases with the possibility of more equitable income distribution.

Despite these positive considerations in favour of education, the World Bank (1986, 1998 and 2000) is not impressed that education especially higher education is pivotal to development, particularly in developing countries. Instead, it advises from its orthodox neo-liberal credo that the state exercises

restraint in investing public funds in social services because investments in them are not Pareto-optimal. It descends heavily on higher education and prescribes the reallocation of public spending away from that sector, the increase in user fees, the decentralisation of provisioning through the encouragement of private tertiary educational institutions and where public sponsored establishments survive, they would be responsible for generating their own funds.

The notoriety of this advice is obvious and it has been challenged in the literature (see, for example, Tilak 2004, Obong, 2004, and Adesina, 2005). Although conservative governments across the developing world have in varying degrees accepted this advice, the ideological confrontation mounted by radical academics in those countries has to a large extent floored the commodification of education inherent in the World Bank position. Nevertheless, that market principle has refused to collapse even under the weight of massive onslaught of progressive organisations yearning for the liberalisation of education

Education is a right and not a privilege and should be provided along that diction." Virtually in all European countries, private universities do not exist and the state accepts education as its responsibility although private funding through grants could be a complement. The race against time weighs heavily against developing countries and education is the only frontier that if won could settle other battles. It is to be hoped that they appreciate the ideological undertones of denying educational opportunities to (their peoples propagated by big capital.

III. Nigeria and Her Educational Development: An Assessment

The strong consensus in the literature on the 'positive linkages between educational attainment and economic development has

already been established. In the first place, a well functioning education sector is essential for growth of the economy, which is a significant drive of poverty reduction. Second, an illiterate population is a burden on a country because their skills are not sharp enough to face the challenges of globalisation. Third, a robust educational system provides the citizens with access to opportunities for better paid employment and enhanced standard of living.

The importance of education in national development is further confirmed by the experiences of developed nations like Britain, the United States, Russia and the emerging Asian giants like China, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. The economic success of these countries is hinged on a deliberate strategy to develop their mid - to high - level labour force. This goes to show that education is critical for human capital to engineer the process of growth and also to translate other resources into instruments of steady development.

Thus, education in general and tertiary education in particular constitutes the engine room of modernisation. A World Bank (2002) Report summarises this view and packages it in the form of economic and social benefits of higher education as is shown in table 1

Table 1
Economic and Social Benefits of Higher Education

Benefits	Private	Public
Economic	Higher salaries Employment Higher Savings Improved Working Conditions Personal and Professional Mobility	Greater Productivity National and Regional Development Reduced Reliance on Government Financial Support Increased Consumption Increased Potential for Transformation from low-skilled Industries to knowledge-based/economy
Social	Improved Quality of life for Self and Children Better Decision-Making Increased Educational Opportunities Healthier Lifestyle and Higher Life Expectancy Improved Personal Status	Nation Building and Development Leadership Democratic Participation, Increased Consensus, Perception that the Society is based on Fairness and Opportunities for all Citizens. Social Mobility. Greater Social Cohesion and Reduced Crime Rates. Improved Health. Improved Basic and Secondary Education.

Source: World Bank (2002), *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, Washington, the World Bank.

Table I is self-explanatory. Anyhow, for these benefits to be realised, sound education policies, which reflect a country's macroeconomic policies must be pursued. In Nigeria, the post-independence period and the oil boom era saw priority given to basic education and efforts geared towards improving quality, increasing girl child enrollments, reducing regional disparities and improving the capacity of institutions responsible for managing education (Ejiogu, 1991; Fafunwa, 1991; Abiodun, 2002 and Federal Ministry of Education, 2003).

Since the reforms that started in 1986, the education policy has been characterized as donor driven and thus lacking a Nigerian perspective (Abubakar, 2001). Within that framework, education is being evaluated from the point of view of accountability and measurement hinges on results obtained based on funds expended.

Therefore, outcomes are matched with costs and efficiency gains and not with their impacts on the development of the society.

But Waters (1998), Samoff (1999) and Federal Ministry of Education (2002) have argued that evaluation should not only serve the interests of donors, but also that of the larger society. In this regard, it is widely acknowledged that evaluation should stem from a development perspective (Chelimsky and Shadish, J 997 and Yagub, 2002). Put differently, education needs to be evaluated in ways that should serve to build capacity for strengthening the embers of development in the country. Apparently because education is evaluated with an eye to profitability, several key-areas that require attention has been neglected. For instance, the informal sector has about 60 per cent of the labour force although it accounted for only 7.2 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1998 (CBN/FOS/NISER, 2001). But the education policy has failed to recognise the support needed to boost the entrepreneurial spirit of those engaged in that sector so that they can be stronger job creators instead of being weaker job seekers.

The education policy has equally not taken cognisance of the evolving structure of the economy. Although growth has been meager, the higher income generated, no doubt, fuels demand for urban-based goods and services. And as industrialisation proceeds, peasants leave subsistence agriculture, which is displaced by more income yielding endeavours. This structural transformation certainly connotes higher productivity, which in turn leads to increases in income per person. This is where the link between education and economic growth comes in. Increases in output per worker are achieved through efficiency improvements and higher capital-labour ratios. Whether it involves technological advances at the factory floors or desk top typing,

individuals must learn about sophisticated tools.

Table II
Federal Government Expenditures on Education as Share of Total Federal Expenditure J 994-2004 in %

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
7.8	12.9	12.3	9.9	9.6	9.0	9.0	7.6	6.1	4.7	4.5

Sources: Hinchliffe, K. (2002), Public Expenditures on Education in Nigeria: Issues, Estimates and Some Implications, Africa Region Plum an 1 Development Working Papers Series, .Washington, The World Bank; Federal Government of Nigeria, Annual Budget (Various Years).

The data presented in table 11 show that since 1994 federal government expenditures on education on average represent below 10 per cent of overall expenditures, it declined drastically in recent years and accounted for only 4.5 per cent of government outlays in 2004. Meanwhile, (he educational sector is growing fast, both in the number of institutions and the size of the total enrollments.

For instance, the number of federal universities was only 5 in 1980, but by 2002 federal, state and private universities had increased in number to 41. In addition, more than 60 polytechnics, 66 colleges of education, 37 colleges of agriculture, 27 schools of health technology, two petroleum training institutes and 4 law colleges have been established to boost the access of aspirants to tertiary education (see Yaqub, 2002). However, the funds available to these institutions do not match their needs as there have been decreases in federal government expenditures on education as mentioned earlier.

Thus, underfunding has become the bane of Nigeria's educational system. With that, there has been a serious crisis of low quality, inefficiency, inadequate learning materials and

overcrowded infrastructures. The combination of low expenditures on education and the inherent poor learning conditions have resulted in deterioration in learning outcomes, leading to rising illiteracy. The records The Nigerian education sector is making only a lackluster progress in this direction as the needed education to appreciate these values has not been given the desired consideration.

Indeed, there has been neither vision nor planning as the demand for education increases as evidenced in the haphazard manner in which primary and secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities have been set up in recent years. It is not even; clear if a Nigerian education system actually exists in the sense of a system as a group of related parts working together as a whole to produce a desired outcome. Even if we accept for the sake of this discussion that such a system exists, then we hasten to add that it lacks a proper regulatory, financing and quality assurance framework. And the role of the state in coordinating the activities of the various institutions that make up the system and ensuring that they work harmoniously to perform defined tasks so as to achieve desired results is suspect.

The government insists that two specific goals in education stand out: ensuring that all children complete UBE of adequate quality and managing the production of graduates to meet the challenges .of the country's development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2003 and Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). In other to fulfill these objectives, an infusion of resources is required and these resources need to be utilized efficiently and equitably too.

But then, education expenditures have plummeted from 8 per cent of total federal government expenditures in 1994 to 5 per cent in 2004 as table II bears witness. Provided by the performance of Nigeria's children in a test

of numeracy and literacy clearly shows a disappointing trend as table III demonstrates.

Table III
Percent Distribution of Nigerian Children Age 4-12 by Numeracy According to Background Characteristics 2004

Background Characteristics	Did not correctly sum numbers no answer given	Correctly summed numbers	Total	Number of children
Age				
4-5	81.2	18.8	100.0	2,028
6-7	60.2	39.8	100.0	1,618
8-12	27.9	72.9	100.0	1,245
Education				
No Schooling	93.6	6.4	100.0	1,781
Pre-primary	71.1	28.9	100.0	575
Primary	36.7	63.3	100.0	3,834
Secondary	3.1	96.9	100.0	190
Residence				
Urban	37.5	62.5	100.00	2,094
Rural	63.0	37.0	100.00	4,291

Source: National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ORC Macro (2004), Nigeria DHS EdData Survey 2004, Education Data for Decision-making, Calverton, National Population Commission and ORC Macro, p. 46

As table 111 testifies, 27 per cent of children age 8-12 could not correctly sum numbers and 63 per cent of them in the rural areas suffer the same fate. As for literacy, 47 per cent of children of that age could not read at all and in the rural areas, the number is 80 per cent (National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ORC Macro, 2004).

With over 40 per cent of children of school age malnourished (UNDP, 2001)

resulting in high repetition and dropout rates.

And despite the fact that over 60 per cent of Nigerian children begin schooling, only about 50 per cent complete primary education, while some 35 per cent of this make it to the end of secondary education (National Population Commission, 2004).

Herein lies the contradiction between the ambitious UBE and the capacity and willingness of both the government and the governed to implement (he programme. One cannot rule out the scourge of poverty as an obstacle to the realisation of that programme. It is only fair to believe that it is impossible to request all parents to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by UBE-when. some of the ultimate beneficiaries - the children from poor homes are engaged in child labour, which contributes substantially to family budgets.

As reported by Akpotu (2004), at least 15 million children are on child labour in Nigeria with some 7 million of them exposed to over 15 hours of work. The latter category of child labourers certainly are not attending school. Implicit in these figures is the altruistic view of child, labour that parents send their children to work when they are driven to do by circumstances (Admssie, 2002; Humphries, 2003 and Tanaka, 2003). However, child labour is motivated by other causes, some even beyond economics like value system that need not detain us here. Whatever is the cause, recent literature supports the contention that although some work can help children acquire human capital needed to function as adults, in general child labour inhibits the formation of human capital needed for economic development through loss of education, damage to health and non-acquisition of capacity to live long and fruitful life by those engaged in it (French, 2002; Krueger, 2003; Satz, 2003 and World Bank, 2004b).

The Nigerian education system has been described as stagnant, decaying and corrupt (Alumanah, 2002; Federal Ministry of Education, 2003). These assessments are no exaggerations considering the dilapidation, the lost standards and sharp practices that pervade the system. Indeed, the edifice that-holds the key to the people's prosperity is fast collapsing and the government does not seem to be

seriously perturbed. Its response to the numerous crises plaguing the system has been lukewarm since it does not readily back its rhetorics with actions. The positions of stakeholders like ASLJU on required methodologies to overhaul the higher education system, for instance, are at best treated with disdain.

Floored in the quest for the golden fleece, many parents seek solace in finding placements for their wards in private institutions at all levels of education. 'Granted that some of these private institutions have infrastructures that are better than those of public institutions, the teaching staff is of doubtful quality in many of them and that is a lesson the government has refused to learn.

Enrollment and access to education in the lower grades in Nigeria has become fairly gender equitable as sensitisation towards girl education has intensified in recent years. However, the gender gap widens as students progress and the disparity in gender equity between the rural and urban areas remains unresolved. In many states in the Northern part of the country, girl child education is still a major challenge.

Given the strong and compelling evidence on the benefits of girl education, which include the expansion of options and choices for renewal over the woman's lifetime, more effective functioning in the labour market, greater family economic strategies and more flexible fertility decisions (World Bank, 2002; World Bank, 2003 and UNICEF, 2003), it is of concern that there is no clear government intervention, that encourages the education of the girl child. Countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Pakistan that are experiencing gender inequity in enrollments have enacted legislations that seek to achieve non-discrimination against girls and women in educational pursuits and have even created leverages for them like the abolition of school fees and provision of stipends, vouchers and grants so that they could progress with certain ease (World Bank, 2004).

The UBE is not free after all because facilities are in short supply. Because of this shortage, parents are in a dilemma since government sponsored institutions cannot accommodate the eligible candidates. Over half of the population are poor and yet; they are expected to bear over half of the cost of schooling. One does not need any hard thought to predict which way the choice would go if some of the children of poor parents are to be denied education. Concluding Remarks

The question that launched this study has to do with education and development in Nigeria. The opportunities and challenges have been identified. Our findings suggest the need for changes in attitude and policy. Even with that, one thing is certain: there is no easy route to integrating education into Nigeria's mainstream development strategy and this calls for concerted actions by both the providers and receivers of this all important commodity.

Since education is both an agent of change and is changed by the society in a dialectical relationship, it influences the social, political and economic fabric of a society and is in turn influenced by them. Therefore, obstacles to enhanced capacity building have far reaching implications for societal cohesion, economic advancement and political transformation. Educational facilities are thus the instruments for the construction of stable citizenship and national viability as well as a training ground for economic and social development.

The Nigerian government needs to provide the requirement for the production of human capital that fits the priorities of our time. That is the only condition by which the economy can quickly move from its present slumber to a modern status. That accomplished, it would become easier to tackle poverty alleviation. The lesson, therefore, is that without adequate investments in good quality education, development would continue to

clude Nigeria and the country and its citizens would remain the poorer consequentially.

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